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ABSTRACT

The first four volumes, comprised of newsletters published during the period of August 1992-January 1996, of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) include articles on: the origins, aims, activities, and membership of the organization; conference activities; development of language testing standards and procedures; guidelines for users of ALTE-developed tests in various languages; definition of proficiency levels; development of a multilingual glossary of language testing terms; and profiles of member institutions. Testing-related professional announcements are also included. (MSE)

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AUGUST 1992
Vol. 1, No. 1

ALTE NEWS

THE ASSOCIATION OF LANGUAGE TESTERS IN EUROPE

Testing organisations representing eight European languages have joined together to improve the quality of modern language assessment and certification.

This group recently registered as a European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG). EEIGs were devised to aid cross-frontier co-operation within the European Community. The participating organisations are striving to further this goal by developing a descriptive framework to help schools, students and employers compare certificates across European languages.

In November 1990, an inaugural meeting of the group was hosted by the Generalitat de Catalunya in Barcelona. The purpose of this meeting was to consider the formation of an association with the aim of promoting future collaboration in the field of language testing. As a result, the *Association of Language Testers in Europe* (ALTE) was established.

Agreement

The second meeting took place in Perugia in April 1991 and, at the third meeting in Cambridge in November 1991, a formal agreement was drafted.

The application to register the ALTE EEIG was completed in February 1992 when official registration made this unique use of an EEIG operational.

The following institutions are signatories to the agreement: Alliance Française (French); Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan); Goethe-Institut (German); Instituto Cervantes (Spanish); Universita per Stranieri, Perugia (Italian); CITO (Dutch); Universidade de Lisboa (Portuguese); University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (English). It is hoped that a Danish member will join in the near future. All of these institutions either produce tests of their own mother-tongue as a foreign language or are in the process of developing tests of this kind.

The principal objectives of ALTE are as follows:

- To establish common levels of proficiency in order to promote the transnational recognition of certification in Europe.
- To establish common standards for all stages of the language testing process, namely for test development, question and item writing, test administration, test marking and grading, reporting of test results, test analysis and reporting of findings.
- To collaborate on joint projects and in the exchange of ideas and know-how.

Work has begun to establish a descriptive framework to cover certification of European languages (see

Continued on Page 2

STEPS TOWARD DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK

STEP 1: Members of the group provide a general (i.e. non-detailed) description of each of their examinations.

STEP 2: The group agrees on its external reference points where appropriate (e.g. Threshold and Waystage).

STEP 3: The descriptions of each examination are translated and circulated together with sample papers to members.

STEP 4: On the basis of Step 3, members place their examinations provisionally alongside others.

STEP 5: Members discuss the groupings and make adjustments.

STEP 6: The provisional Table with five levels is drafted and circulated.

STEP 7: A research programme is initiated to check the judgements based on content inspection (Steps 4-5).

STEP 8*: Refinements to descriptions, levels and groupings are made as necessary based on Step 7.

STEP 9*: The comparison is extended to examinations in specialist areas (eg. French, German, etc. for business).

STEP 10*: The Table and descriptions are circulated to user groups (students, teachers, employers, agencies, etc.) and other examination providers for feedback.

*Steps still to be undertaken: project plans are being drawn up for the necessary empirical research work to begin in 1992.

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ALTE

EC examination co-operative

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table on page 1). An initial result is the charting of a provisional table of exams at five levels (steps 4–6). This is the first in a number of expected outcomes.

Future success of the project appears promising because the descriptive framework will build upon an established language examination foundation. The examinations involved have developed over many years with their own traditions and followings; collectively, they are already used and accepted in all EC and most other European countries, and are taken annually by more than 300,000 candidates.

All members are committed to successful completion of the project. Initially, each member country has contributed its own system of examinations and its own judgement of where its examinations fit into the framework. Each member now has the opportunity to be involved in a programme of empirical research to support judgements that are made (see Step 7).

The fourth meeting held in Lisbon in April 1992 focused on: a) the development of a *code of practice* designed to enable all the member institutions to establish and adhere to a clear set of standards in their testing and certification activities; b) Step 7 within the descriptive framework project. A programme of work to compare the examination at each level was drawn up which will use a 'content checklist'.

The group agreed that ALTE meetings will be held every six months and that a newsletter will be produced following each meeting. It is hoped that a mailing list will be set up and that this will provide a means of keeping the public up-to-date on the projects and informed about ALTE's other activities. The next ALTE meeting will be hosted by the Instituto Cervantes in November.

Conference

In August 1993, the 15th Annual Language Testing Colloquium will be jointly hosted by two members of ALTE – UCLES and CITO. The first part of the colloquium will be held in Cambridge (August 2–5) and the second part will be in Arnhem (August 5–8). This will be the first time the event has been held outside North America.

For more details contact the UCLES or CITO representatives (see page 3).

The following are the examinations offered by ALTE members in order of increasing difficulty for each language:

CATALAN

Certificat Internacional de Català: Nivell bàsic (NB)

Certificat Internacional de Català: Nivell llindar (NL)

DUTCH

Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I (NT2-I)

Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen II (NT2-II)

ENGLISH

Key English Test (KET)

Preliminary English Test (PET)

First Certificate in English (FCE)

Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)

Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)

FRENCH

Certificat Elémentaire de Française Pratique (CEFP)

Diplôme de Langue (DL)

Diplôme Supérieur d'Etudes Françaises Modernes (DS)

GERMAN

Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaF)

Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP)

Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung (ZOP)

Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KDS)

ITALIAN

Certificato de Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana (Livello 1) (CELI1)

Certificato de Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana (Livello 2) (CELI2)

Certificato de Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana (Livello 3) (CELI3)

Certificato de Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana (Livello 4) (CELI4)

Certificato de Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana (Livello 5) (CELI5)

PORTUGUESE

Certificado de Língua Portuguesa (CELP)

SPANISH

Certificado Inicial de Español como Lengua Extranjera (CIE)

Diploma Básico de Español (DBE)

Diploma Superior Español (DSE)

ALTE Members

The ALTE Secretariat is based at the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). The manager is Dr. Michael Milanovic to whom all enquiries on ALTE should be made.

English

The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) was established in 1858 to set standards of efficiency for schools in the UK. Today it has charitable status as an institution of the University and aims to provide an educational assessment service world-wide.

The English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Division is responsible for supervising the production of examinations and for their continual development to meet the changing needs of candidates. It also carries out research (e.g.into marking procedures), new test development and extensive pretesting for the evaluation of examinations.

UCLES offers four main EFL examinations covering a range of abilities. These can be taken at over 1500 centres in 110 countries.

For further information on UCLES and the examinations it offers, please write to the address below:

Marketing Division
UCLES
1 Hills Road
Cambridge CB1 2EU
ENGLAND
Tel: +44-223-61-111
Fax: +44-223-46-02-78

Dutch

The Centraal Instituut Voor Toetsontwikkeling (CITO-National Institute for Educational Measurement) is a non-profit institution founded in 1968 by the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science.

One of the main responsibilities of the Institute is the design and development of achievement and proficiency tests. It is also in charge of the implementation of programme assessment and evaluation at local and national levels and the advancement of both applied and theoretical research. This is in addition to providing a wide range of services to educational and research organisations.

The two examinations in Dutch as a Second Language qualify students to enter two different areas. One is associated with higher education and the professions, the other with vocational training and occupations.

For further information on CITO and the examinations it offers, please write to:

De Heer Jan Mets
CITO
Postbus 1034
6801 MG Arnhem — Tel: +31-85-52-14-33
NETHERLANDS — Fax: +31-85-52-13-56

French

The Alliance Française is a state-approved, non-profit making organization founded in Paris on 21 July 1883. It is dedicated to the teaching and the diffusion of the French language and culture. All over the world, the Alliance provides a variety of cultural activities and courses at all levels for people of all ages and occupations.

The Alliance Française offers seven different diplomas in language, civilisation, literature, business French and commercial translation. These can be taken at one of 216 centres in 75 countries.

For further information on the Alliance Française and its examinations, please write to the address below:

Mme Simonne Lieutaud
Alliance Française
101, boulevard Raspail
75270 Paris Cedex 06 — Tel: +33-1-45-44-38-28
FRANCE — Fax: +33-1-45-44-89-42

Spanish

The Instituto Cervantes, created in March 1991, is an organisation with its own legal identity and is regulated by private law. Its aims are to promote the teaching of Spanish world-wide and to spread the Spanish language and culture abroad. As a result of agreements with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Instituto is responsible for the administration of the diplomas of Spanish as a Foreign Language. The University of Salamanca is entrusted with the production and marking of the exams.

There are currently two exams offered, although there will be a third, low-level examination from 1993 onwards.

For further information on the Instituto Cervantes and examinations it offers, please write to the address below:

Sr. Alvaro Garcia Santa-Cecilia
Instituto Cervantes
Collegio del Rey
C/ Libreros, 23
28801 Alcala de Henares
Madrid — Tel: +34-1-88-56-153
SPAIN — Fax: +34-1-88-30-814

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Catalan

The regional government of the Generalitat de Catalunya created the General Directorate for Linguistic Policy (DGPL) in 1980, as part of the Ministry of Culture. Its aims are to give impetus to the development of linguistic legislation and to monitor the implementation of linguistic policy. Within the directorate the Linguistic Advisory Department is responsible for organising Catalan courses for adults and teacher training courses. This department also sets and administers the examinations leading to the Certificat Internacional de Català.

The examinations of the Certificat Internacional de Català at present are aimed at learners of Catalan as a Foreign Language at two levels of general attainment. Later on, the aim is to offer three different levels of general attainment as well as certificates for Catalan for specific purposes.

For further information on the Generalitat de Catalunya and the exams it offers, please write to:

Snr. Carles Duarte i Montserrat
Direcció General de Política Lingüística
Servei d' Assessorament Lingüistic
C/ de Mallorca, 272, 8a planta
Barcelona
Catalonia Tel: +34-3-21-59-004
SPAIN Fax: +34-3-21-60-455

Portuguese

The Departmento de Língua e Cultura Protuguesa (DLCP) is the Department of the University of Lisbon where Portuguese as a foreign and second language is taught. In addition to language courses, there are courses held for non-native speakers in history, art, literature and geography. The department organises a post-graduate course and teacher training courses and is involved in the publishing of books and teaching materials. It also co-ordinates research in the field of teaching Portuguese as a foreign and second language.

Only the first examination in Portuguese as a Foreign Language (CELP) will be available in 1993.

Practical information will be available and given upon request to potential candidates from November onwards.

For the further information on the University of Lisbon and the examinations it offers, please write to the address below:

Prof. João Malaca Casteleiro
Departamento de Língua e Cultura Portuguesa
Alameda da Universidade
1699 Lisboa Tel: +351-1-7933356
PORTUGAL Fax: +351-1-7937625

German

The Goethe-Institut was founded in 1951 to promote a wider knowledge abroad of the German language and to foster cultural co-operation with other countries. It is a non-profit making, publicly-funded organization with its head office in Munich.

The Goethe-Institut offers eight examinations ranging from elementary to very advanced. These can be taken at one of 157 centres in 73 countries.

For further information on the Goethe-Institut and the examinations it offers, please write to the address below:

Frau Sabine Schulz
Goethe-Institut
Zentralverwaltung/Ref.43
Balastraße 57
Postfach 80 07 27
8000 München 90 Tel: +49-089-41-86-80
GERMANY Fax: +49-089-41-86-84-50

Italian

The Università per Stranieri di Perugia (U.S.P) is the University for Foreigners at Perugia. It was founded in 1925 as an autonomous institute of higher education. In February 1992 it became a University with a faculty of Italian language and culture for foreigners. Its aim is to spread the knowledge of all forms of historical and contemporary Italian culture. This is done in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Italian Ministry of Education.

The University holds courses for foreigners of all nationalities throughout the year. It offers five examinations at different levels of ability. These can be taken in May and November at an Italian Institute of Culture or an examination centre approved by the University.

For further information on the University for Foreigners at Perugia and the examinations it offers, please write to:

Prof. Norberto Cacciaglia
Università per Stranieri
Palazzo Gallenga
Piazza Fortebraccio, 4
06100 Perugia Tel:+39 75/61972
ITALY Fax:+39 75/5730901

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ALTE NEWS

FEBRUARY 1993
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MEMBERS:

Alliance Française
101 bis Rasp
75270 Paris
Cedex 06
France

CITO
(Centraal Instituut voor Toetsontwikkeling)
P.O. Box 1034
6801 M.G. Arnhem
The Netherlands

Generalitat de Catalunya
Direcció General de Política Lingüística
Mallorca, 272 8è planta
08037 Barcelona
Spain

Goethe-Institut
Helene-Weber-Allee 1
Postfach 19 04 19
8000 München 19
Germany

Instituto Cervantes
Libreros, 23
28801 Alcalá de Henares
Madrid
Spain

Universidade de Lisboa
Departamento de Língua e Cultura Portuguesa
Alameda da Universidade
1699 Lisboa
Portugal

Università per Stranieri
Palazzo Gallenga
Piazza Fortebraccio
06122 Perugia
Italy

University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
1, Hills Road
Cambridge CB1 2EU
England

The Fifth Meeting of ALTE

The 5th meeting of The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) took place in Spain on 13th, 14th and 15th November 1992. It was hosted by the Instituto Cervantes in Alcalá de Henares and representatives of all member institutions attended.

New Membership

An approach from a Danish language consortium applying for membership of ALTE was discussed. The Members voted unanimously to admit this group as the Danish representative to ALTE.

The members of the consortium are as follows: The University of Copenhagen, Institute of Nordic Philology; Studieskolen in Copenhagen, Danish Section; The Danish Refugee Council, Language Section.

It is hoped that a Danish representative will be able to attend the next meeting in April 1993.

Framework Project

In Perugia in 1991, work started on establishing a common framework of levels of proficiency. This work was carried forward following the meetings of the group which were held in Cambridge and Lisbon. The first objective involved the inspection and description of all general language examinations offered by each institution in order to get a better understanding of the types of examination and certification which are offered by ALTE members. An important outcome of this work will be the publication of a brief guide to ALTE examinations which will bring together for the first time an overview of all the examinations which are available.

A revised version of this booklet was tabled for discussion and a number of decisions were made. In particular it was agreed that publication and distribution of an English language version will be a priority in early 1993 and that other language versions will subsequently be produced in a standardised "house style". (The English version is due for publication in March 1993.)

In order to compare the examinations, a draft framework table was drawn up, enabling members to place their own examinations on a provisional 5 band scale (ranging approximately from Waystage Level at the bottom to Advanced Level at the top). This allowed the members to work on the assumption that different language examinations placed at the same level might be comparable in terms of difficulty and coverage of the language.

In order to compare the examinations more closely, Content Analysis Checklists were designed and used to focus attention on the test method characteristics employed in the examinations. Although the members are now carrying out these systematic comparisons between the examinations, it was agreed early on in the exercise that this type of subjective comparison would not be sufficient. If a framework table is to be produced for public information, it will first have to be validated by some kind of experimental work. With this in mind, work has now begun on setting up what has been termed a Critical Levels Project.

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The Fifth Meeting of ALTE

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The aims of this project are to set up a framework based on a series of critical levels of performance (in work and society) which will be established through widespread consultative investigations. The levels will be empirically validated through the construction and calibration of a series of performance-based tasks reflecting activities at the different critical levels. These calibrated tasks will provide a basis for a framework which allows for the reliable mapping of different language qualifications in the EEC languages on to the same scale. This is a complex activity which has not been carried out before; as a result, it is likely that the project will be broken down into a number of sub-projects (at least 3) to be worked on by different members of ALTE and that the time scale for completion of the work will be at least 3 years.

A Code of Practice for ALTE members

A general document entitled a *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education* was tabled at the ALTE meeting in Perugia (April 1991). Reference: Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education. (1988) Washington, D.C. Joint Committee on Testing Practices. (Mailing address: Joint Committee on Testing Practices, American Psychological Association, 1200 17th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.)

It was suggested that this general approach might provide a useful starting point in the debate on establishing a common code of practice for ALTE. As a step forward, Michael Milanovic and Nick Saville compiled a more specific document, entitled *Principles of Good Practice for ALTE Examinations*, which was tabled for discussion and was the focus of a seminar involving group work activities on the second day of the meeting in Alcalá.

The principles of good practice which were discussed are aimed at ensuring that ALTE examinations can be shown to meet explicit criteria in terms of four major examination qualities, namely: validity, reliability, impact and practicality. In order for an examination to fulfil a useful function within societal and educational processes an appropriate balance must be achieved between these four qualities.

In general terms, all examinations are context specific; this means that practical considerations and constraints must be taken into account regarding examination development and administration so that the appropriate balance is achieved for any given situation (e.g. educational context, group of examination takers and examination purpose).

It should be noted that the individual examination qualities cannot be evaluated independently; rather the relative importance of the qualities must be determined in order to maximise the overall usefulness of the examination. Successful examinations cannot be developed, however, without due consideration being given to all qualities.

It is recognised that ALTE members have a responsibility to be held accountable for matters related to the use of their examinations. This involves providing high quality service to the users of ALTE examinations which meets an agreed code of practice. The issue of minimum standards for international examinations will, therefore, have to be addressed in future.

An ALTE Testing Service, Item Banking and Computer Aided Testing

The concept of an ALTE Testing Service had been discussed briefly in Lisbon in relation to contacts with various language schools and other institutions.

In terms of language assessment, the main aim of such a service would be to meet the demands of businesses and other organisations which are currently not catered for by the existing examinations. This would mean that, for each language, the target candidature would not be the same as for the existing certificates and diplomas in that language. A characteristic approach would be the development of parallel tests in different languages based on the same specifications.

The issues of item banking, test linking, and the use of computers for storage of data and in computer adaptive testing were discussed on the morning of Day 3. John de Jong gave a lecture on item banking and test linking procedures which are currently employed by CITO.

It was agreed that these issues should be followed up at the next meeting with more presentations and a demonstration of software which is currently used by some members (e.g. for item banking).

Next Meeting

It was confirmed that the next ALTE meeting will be in Paris from 23 to 25 April 1993.

LINGUA FUNDING

In 1992 ALTE applied to the LINGUA Bureau for funding to cover certain aspects of its activities. In December the funding was approved.

FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

As the last ALTE meeting was in Spain, the next two pages of ALTE News have features on the Instituto Cervantes and Carles Duarte i Montserrat. Future issues will focus on the places and personnel associated with other ALTE members.

Profile

CARLES DUARTE I MONTSERRAT

Carles Duarte i Montserrat is the Head of the Linguistic Advisory Department in the General Directorate of Linguistic Policy of Catalonia, the institution which sets and administers the examinations of the Certificate Internacional de Català. In his career as a linguist he has also worked at the University of Barcelona and the Catalan School of Public Administration, and since 1983 he has been director of the *Revista Llengua i Dret* (Language and Law Review).

He is the co-author of a range of books covering topics related to the field of linguistics. *Síntesi d'història de la llengua catalana* and *Gramàtica històrica del català* are on the history of the Catalan language, while *Llengua i Administració* and *Manual de llenguatge administratiu* are about the use of languages for specific purposes.

Alongside his academic career, Carles Duarte has a second career as a writer of articles, fiction and poetry. To date five collections of his poems have been published - *Vida endins* (1984), *Paisatges efímers* (1989), *La pluja del temps* (1990), *La pell del somni* (1991) and *Llavis de terra* (1993). Translations of his poems have appeared in Spanish, English, Italian, Russian and Ukrainian.

Alcalá de Henares

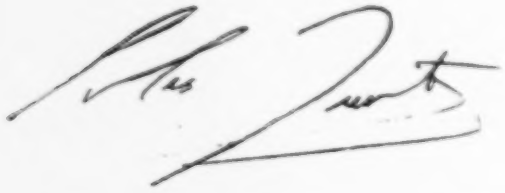
Als meus amics d'ALTE

Camino el verd humit
entre les pedres
com si fossin mots
a sons antics
ara rescrits
per les nostres petjades.

Camina el temps
a dins dels nostres ulls,
les veus, les mans
de nou s'entrecreuaran.

Dins del pati ressona
el nom d'un vell silenci.

Novembre de 1992



Alcalá de Henares
To my friends from ALTE

I walk the grass
among the stones
like words
or former sounds
that we rewrite
with our footsteps.

The time is walking
in our eyes.
We mix again
voices and hands.

In the courtyard echoes
the name of an old silence.

translation by the author

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The Instituto Cervantes

Spanish is the native language of 320 million people worldwide: it is estimated that by the end of the century this number will have risen to 420 million, about 7% of the world's population. As a world language, it is in third place to Chinese and English. It is also central to a rich and vigorous cultural tradition, rooted not only in Spain itself, but throughout the many countries of the Spanish-speaking world.

Bearing in mind this high linguistic and cultural status, it is surprising to find that Spanish is still one of the least-frequently taught languages in the countries of the European community. In recent years, however, there has been a growing demand for Spanish language courses, not only from people with a general interest in the language and culture, but from those who need it for economic, social and political reasons.

It was against this background, and in response to the increasing interest in Spanish, that the Instituto Cervantes was set up in 1991 with the aim of promoting the linguistic and cultural heritage of the people of all Spanish-speaking countries. Its headquarters are housed in the "Colegio del Rey" (El Colegio Menor de San Felipe y Santiago), a beautiful building which dates back to 1550, and which was originally a school of theology and law for the sons of officials of the royal household. It is located at Alcalá de Henares, the small town not far from Madrid where Cervantes was born.

The Instituto, which has royal patronage, is a non-profit-making public body. In order to fulfil its aims it engages in a variety of activities connected with Spanish language and culture. Among the most important of these are the development of existing centres where courses in Spanish are run and the creation of new centres, the administration of examinations in Spanish language, the training of language teachers, publishing materials for teachers, research into linguistic and educational issues and collaboration with foreign research centres.

The centres of the Instituto Cervantes are run with the following objectives in mind:

- to enable students to use Spanish effectively as a means of communication;
- to promote international understanding and a greater appreciation of other cultures through the teaching of language;
- to provide students with the means of continuing to study the Spanish language as independent learners.

Two aspects of the work of the Instituto Cervantes are particularly worthy of note:

The first is the connection with the LINGUA programme, which was set up in 1989 by the European Community with the aim of helping member states to improve the teaching and learning of their national languages within the community. Each country has a national agency, and in Spain this is administered jointly by the Instituto Cervantes and the Ministry of Education and Science. The Instituto is thus directly involved in furthering the aims of the LINGUA programme in providing teacher training, encouraging inter-university links, student exchanges and support programmes and promoting the appropriate use of foreign languages in the workplace. The relative lack of interest shown in the past in Spanish as a Foreign Language in other European countries provides a key challenge to the Instituto Cervantes in its role as a part of the Spanish national agency of LINGUA, as one of the agency's fundamental objectives is to support all kinds of activities leading to a growth in the use of Spanish in Europe.

The second aspect of the work of the Instituto Cervantes which is of particular interest is its role as adminstrator of the *Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera*, an examination for foreign learners of Spanish, which is set and marked by the University of Salamanca. The examination, which was first introduced in 1988 is currently available at two levels of difficulty, the *Diploma Básico* at an intermediate level, and the *Diploma Superior* at an advanced level. An examination at a lower level (*Certificado Inicial*) is to be introduced during 1993. These examinations are the only officially accredited tests of Spanish as a Foreign Language, and are recognised internationally by companies, chambers of commerce and educational establishments.

Instituto Cervantes

JANUARY, 1994
Vol. 2, No. 2

ALTE NEWS

ALTE establishes a framework of levels

The ALTE framework is explained to the Duke of Edinburgh on his visit to UCLES, May 1993.

With the breaking down of international barriers between the states of the European Union, and increasing opportunities for members of the workforce to move from one country to another, the need for transferability of qualifications is clear.

Employers and employees alike need to know exactly what language qualifications gained in various countries mean – what the holder of a given certificate can actually be expected to be able to do – and how to make meaningful comparisons between qualifications gained in different EU states. Employers need to know which particular language qualification it is realistic to demand when advertising a post, and employees have an interest in being able to rate their own present level of expertise and future training needs. One of the principal objectives of ALTE is to establish common levels of proficiency in order to promote the transnational recognition of certification in Europe. The first step towards achieving this was the publication of ALTE Document 1, 'European Language Examinations', a description of the general language examinations offered by all ALTE members.

This document exists both to provide information about examinations and to serve as the descriptive foundation for a definition of the framework of levels of proficiency on which the examinations provided by members of ALTE can be placed. At the present stage of development of the framework considerable agreement has been reached on the content definition of the three lower levels of proficiency. It will be possible to reach a final definition only when empirical research has been carried out.

Association of Language Testers in Europe
ALTE

MEMBERS:

Alliance Française
[illegible]

CITO
[illegible]

Generalitat de Catalunya
Direcció General de Política Lingüística
Mallorca 272, 1er piso
[illegible]
Spain

Danish Language Testing Consortium
Institut for Nordisk Filologi
Københavns Universitet
Njalsgade 80
København S
Denmark

Goethe-Institut
Helene-Weber-Allee 1
80637 München
Germany

Instituto Cervantes
Libreros, 23
28801 Alcalá de Henares
Madrid
Spain

Universidade de Lisboa
Departamento de Língua e Cultura Portuguesa
Alameda da Universidade
1699 Lisboa codex
Portugal

Università per Stranieri
Palazzo Gallenga
Piazza Fortebraccio, 4
06122 Perugia
Italy

University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
1, Hills Road
Cambridge CB1 2EU
England

Universidad de Salamanca
Cursos Internacionales
Pabellón de Estudios Menores
37008 Salamanca
Spain

SECRETARIAT: Dr. Michael Milanovic, University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 1, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU, England Tel: +44-223-61111 Fax: +44-223-460278

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Levels 1 - 3 of the ALTE framework

	LANGUAGE	
LEVEL 1 Waystage User	Catalan	Certificat Internacional de Català. Nivell Basic (NB)
	Danish	Test 1 / Basic 1
	English	Key English Test (KET)
	Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 1 (CELI 1)
LEVEL 2 Threshold User	Catalan	Certificat Internacional de Català. Nivell Llindar (NL)
	Danish	Test 2 / Basic 2
	English	Preliminary English Test (PET)
	French	Certificat Elémentaire de Français Pratique (CEFP)
	German	Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaF)
	Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 2 (CELI 2)
	Portuguese	Certificado de Língua Portuguesa (CELP)
	Spanish	Certificado Inicial de Español (CIE)
LEVEL 3 Independent User	English	First Certificate in English (FCE)
	French	Diplôme de Langue Française (DL)
	German	Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP)
	Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 3 (CELI 3)
	Spanish	Diploma Básico de Español (DBE)

This placing of examinations in the lower three levels of the framework has been arrived at by a systematic process of comparison of the examinations concerned. Members of ALTE undertook this detailed comparison of the examinations by using content analysis checklists which focused on the test method characteristics and the components of language ability being tested.

This involved looking at factors such as the components which make up the examination, how many questions or tasks each consists of and what percentage of the total mark is accounted for by that component. They also looked in detail at types of texts used, both in terms of length and source and in terms of whether the purpose of the text was to explain, describe, instruct, persuade, etc. In addition, comparisons were made of candidate performance in writing and speaking. This was based on analysis of scripts and of videos of candidates taking part in oral tests.

Higher Levels of the ALTE framework

Other examinations provided by members of ALTE are at a higher level, and two or more additional levels will in future be added to this framework. The examinations which have been provisionally placed in the higher levels are given in the diagram below. A further stage in the development of the framework involves checking the levels objectively.

HIGHER LEVELS

LANGUAGE	
Danish	Danskprøve 2
Dutch	Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal. Examen I (NT2-I) Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal. Examen II (NT2-II)
English	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
French	Diplôme Supérieur d'Etudes Françaises Modernes (DS)
German	Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KDS) Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom (GDS)
Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 4 (CELI 4) Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 5 (CELI 5)
Portuguese	Diploma de Língua Portuguesa (DILP)
Spanish	Diploma Superior de Español (DSE)

Levels 1 to 3

The three lower levels are characterized briefly in the summaries below; examples, rather than full descriptions of what learners at each level can do, are given.

Level 1 - Waystage User

Examinations provided by ALTE members at level 1 are influenced by the Council of Europe's 'Waystage 90' specification. At this level, learners are acquiring a general basic ability to communicate in a limited number of the most familiar situations in which language is used in everyday life.

The materials a Waystage User can deal with

Learners at this level need to be able to understand simple written and spoken messages, many of which are of the kind needed for survival when travelling or going about in public in a foreign country. Some of these are listed below.

Reading: street signs, public notices, product packaging, forms, brochures, instructions on how to make a telephone call.
Listening: announcements at railway stations and airports, public announcements at sporting events and pop concerts.

What a Waystage User can do

Some of the things learners at this level can do are:

find out what time events start or finish
ask simple questions to get more information
find out what something costs
understand the outline of a guided tour
take the name of a telephone caller
write a simple thank-you letter
get information from a tourist brochure, using a dictionary.

Level 2 - Threshold User

Examinations provided by ALTE members at level 2 are influenced by the Council of Europe's 'Threshold 90' specification. At this level a learner should be able to cope with language in a range of everyday situations, as long as the language used is largely predictable.

The materials a Threshold User can deal with

Learners at this level need to be able to handle the same sorts of written and spoken materials as at level 1, but understanding is beginning to go beyond merely being able to pick out facts, and may involve opinions, attitudes, moods and wishes. Some materials are listed below.

Reading: street signs and public notices, posters, brochures, city-guides, personal correspondence in the form of letters and postcards, newspaper and magazine articles and weather forecasts.
Listening: announcements made at railway stations and airports, traffic information given on the radio, announcements made at public events and instructions given by police or customs officials.

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What a Threshold User can do

Some of the things learners at this level can do are:

get all the information they need from a tourist office
understand the main points of a guided tour
ask questions to get more information
deal with most situations likely to arise when making travel arrangements
deal with most situations likely to arise when travelling
receive and pass on routine telephone messages
read and understand simple information.

Several of the examinations provided by members of ALTE at this level are used as measures of language ability for official or institutional purposes, such as acquiring citizenship or entry to courses of study.

Level 3 - Independent User

Level 3 may be referred to as an intermediate stage of proficiency. A learner at this level is expected to be able to handle the main structures of the language with some confidence, demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary and communicate appropriately in a variety of social situations. Their understanding of spoken and written language should go beyond being able to pick out items of factual information, and they should be able to distinguish between the main points of a text and specific details. They should be able to write for a variety of purposes, showing the ability to develop an argument as well as describe or recount events.

The materials an Independent User can deal with

Learners at this level can cope with reading and listening materials which are are generally longer than the very brief signs, notices etc. which are used at level 1 and level 2. Some of them are listed below.

Reading: instructions, brochures, newspaper and magazine articles, works of fiction, books on topics of contemporary interest.
Listening: radio broadcasts, interviews, features, news items, conversations, announcements, instructions.

What an Independent User can do

Some of the things learners at this level can do are:

understand all but technical terms given in a guided tour
give a tour of a familiar site
take part in a conversation of a factual type
express opinions in conversation
talk in simple terms about cultural topics such as music
take a fairly complicated message over the telephone
understand a tourist brochure
write personal letters.

Examinations at this level are frequently used as proof that the learner can do office work or take a course of study in the language being learned. A learner at this level could be assumed to have sufficient expertise in the language being learned for it to be of use in clerical, secretarial and managerial posts, and in some industries, such as tourism, in particular.

Profile

Staff of the Examinations Research Unit (Unit 2, New Developments)

Dr Michaela Perlmann-Balme *Dr Sibylle Bolton*
Heinrich Stricker

Dr Michaela Perlmann-Balme joined the Goethe-Institut in 1987, and has been with the Examinations Unit since 1990. She is currently engaged in supervising the revision project for the Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung, an intermediate level examination placed at level 3 in the ALTE framework.

Dr Perlmann-Balme gained her doctorate in German Studies from the Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, Munich. Before joining the Goethe-Institut, she worked as a teacher of German as a Foreign Language at Otago University, New Zealand and taught German literature at the Ludwig-Maximilians Universität.

Heinrich Stricker is mainly occupied with two projects for testing business German, the Zertifikat Deutsch für den Beruf, which is at a lower intermediate level, and the revision of the Prüfung Wirtschaftsdeutsch international, an examination at an advanced level. In this capacity, he works closely with the German Chambers of Commerce and the Institute of Adult Education. He has been with the Examinations Unit since 1992.

Having completed his MA and Staatsexamen in German Studies, he began his career in the United Kingdom, working as a foreign language assistant at Exeter University. Subsequently, he taught at secondary-school level and at Goethe-Institut centres in Blaubeuren and Munich. From 1986 to 1992 he was back in the UK as course director at the Manchester branch of the Goethe-Institut.

Photographs by Hans-Georg Thönges

Dr Sibylle Bolton has worked for the Goethe-Institut since 1989, when she joined the Examinations Unit. She currently has responsibility for the two advanced level examinations, the Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom and Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom.

Her doctorate, which she gained from the University of Frankfurt, is in Linguistics, with a particular emphasis on communicative testing. Having begun her career teaching French and German at a grammar school in London, she returned to Germany and went to work for the German Adult Education Association, where she supervised the development of tests. Dr Bolton has also worked for the University of Frankfurt and spent four years as an assistant professor at Indiana University, USA.

In future she expects to spend more time working in an advisory capacity rather than on any one examination, overseeing the revision of tests, running seminars on testing for internal and external staff and representing the Goethe-Institut in external projects such as ALTE and the Council of Europe framework project.

The Staff of the Examinations Research Unit; from the left: Dr Sibylle Bolton, Barbara Obermaier, Heinrich Stricker, Ursula Praetorius, Dr Michaela Perlmann-Balme, Jutta Steiff.

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The Goethe-Institut

Since its foundation in 1951 the Goethe-Institut has been playing a leading role in promoting the German language and German culture throughout the world. A non-profit-making, publicly-funded organization, its activities cover not only language learning and teacher-training but a wide-ranging and varied programme of cultural co-operation and events.

The work of 16 Goethe-Institut centres in Germany and around 140 in over 70 countries is co-ordinated by the head office in Munich. Head office also organizes the training and professional development of staff and is responsible for developing new teaching materials, demonstrating innovations in educational technology and generally promoting the exchange of ideas and information in the field of German as a Foreign Language.

These materials and ideas feed into the teaching and learning of the German language worldwide, both in Goethe-Institut centres and in other institutions. One of the primary concerns of the Goethe-Institut is to promote German language teaching in other countries, and to this end it forms close links with foreign educational institutions, universities, associations of language teachers and institutes of adult education. Non-native teachers of German can be provided with in-service training as well as textbooks and teaching materials suited to their local needs, and scholarships enabling people to study German in Germany are offered.

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Possibly the best-known function of the Goethe-Institut in the eyes of the general public is its role as a provider of German language courses. These are available at all levels of proficiency, and include special courses for people who need to use German for their work. During the summer holidays there are courses for young people, which combine language learning with a programme of leisure, social and sports activities.

For those students who want or need some qualification to show what they can do at the end of their course of study, the Goethe-Institut sets and administers the following examinations:

Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaF, elementary level)
Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP, intermediate level)
Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung (ZOP, advanced level)
Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KDS, advanced level)
Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom (GDS, near native speaker level).

The following examination in German for business people is offered at an intermediate level:

Prüfung Wirtschaftsdeutsch international (PWD).

The high status of these examinations is recognized both within Germany and abroad. The ZDaF is developed in co-operation with the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband. The two most advanced of the general examinations have been developed with the co-operation of the University of Munich, and the business language examination is set in conjunction with the Deutsche Industrie und Handelstag and the Carl Duisberg Centren, two national organizations for trade and industry. The examinations are widely used as a way of measuring language proficiency for a number of purposes: for example, the ZDaF is a prerequisite for the granting of German citizenship, attainment of the KDS exempts candidates for entrance to German universities from the usual language test, and the GDS is recognized in some countries as a language proficiency qualification for prospective teachers of German.

The ethos of the Goethe-Institut lays heavy stress on its central aim of promoting German culture and civilization. Getting to know German life and culture is an integral part of every language course, but the emphasis on culture goes much further than this, both in Germany and through the centres in other countries. The types of events organized include conferences, films, performances of all kinds of music, dance and theatre, arts workshops, exhibitions and readings by authors. A network of libraries and multi-media resource centres has been set up, which provides a comprehensive lending, reference and information service about Germany.

The 7th Meeting of ALTE

The 7th meeting of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) took place in Germany on November 12, 13 and 14, 1993. It was hosted by the Goethe-Institut at their head office in Munich, and attended by representatives of testing institutions in nine European languages.

The opening address was given by Dr Horst Harnischfeger, the General Secretary of the Goethe-Institut.

Membership

ALTE now has ten members, having been joined by the Cursos Internacionales department of the University of Salamanca. The University, like the Instituto Cervantes, which is also a member of ALTE, is involved in the examinations in Spanish as a Foreign Language which are issued by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science.

ALTE publications

There are now four ALTE documents in the process either of being prepared for publication, or of being revised. These are: ALTE Document 1, *European Language Examinations*, ALTE Document 2, *European Examination Systems*, ALTE Document 3, *The ALTE Code of Practice* and ALTE Document 4, *The ALTE Framework*.

European Language Examinations, which was first published and distributed earlier this year, has been revised to include descriptions of the examinations offered by the Danish Language Testing Consortium and new examinations introduced by several other members. It will be available early in 1994, and will appear in a French as well as an English version.

The new version of *European Language Examinations* will contain a summary of the information given in *The ALTE Framework*. This document gives details of ongoing work on the framework of levels of language proficiency being developed by members of ALTE in order to make possible the comparison of language qualifications gained in different European states.

The other two documents which will shortly be ready for publication are connected with the aim of ALTE 'to establish common standards for all stages of the language testing process'. One of them, *European Examination Systems*, describes the processes by which each member produces language examinations, marks and grades papers and issues results. The other is *The ALTE Code of Practice*, which sets out the responsibilities of ALTE members towards examination users and takers, laying down minimum standards which can be met by all members in relation to the examinations described in ALTE Document 1. Areas covered include providing information about the nature and administration of examinations and about examination results to users and takers, and making examinations as fair as possible for all candidates.

A multilingual glossary of testing terms

At the ALTE meeting held in Paris in April 1993 it was decided that, in addition to the brief glossaries of terms included in some ALTE documents, a need existed for a multilingual glossary of terms used in testing.

Work has now begun on this project, with the translation into English of a list of Dutch terms provided by CITO. Further work on the English terms is being undertaken, before translation into the other languages of ALTE members begins.

A business language test

Plans for developing an on-demand uncertificated test for the use of businesses are progressing, and work has gone ahead on producing materials for an English version.

It was agreed that versions of the test in other languages will be produced through the use of common specifications.

New developments

Descriptions of two new examinations will be included in the revised edition of ALTE Document 1, *European Language Examinations*. An examination in Spanish as a Foreign Language, the Certificado Inicial de Español, will have its first administration in May 1994. This examination is based on the Council of Europe's Threshold specification. Also in 1994, an examination at an advanced level in Portuguese as a Foreign Language, the Diploma de Língua Portuguesa, will become available.

Further progress in the provision of examinations in Portuguese has been taking place throughout 1993, with negotiations between the University of Lisbon and the Portuguese Ministry of Education for the setting up of an Evaluation Unit. This Unit will oversee the development of a suite of examinations in Portuguese as a Foreign Language, building on the work already done by the Departamento de Língua e Cultura Portuguesa of the University of Lisbon. The proposal for the Evaluation Unit to be set up has now been approved by the Ministry of Education, and it is hoped that this will take place in January 1994.

Next meeting

It was confirmed that the next ALTE meeting will be held in Arnhem on April 15, 16 and 17, 1994.

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Using the ALTE Framework

MEMBERS:

Alliance Française
101, bd Raspail
75270 Paris
Cedex 06
France

CITO
(Instituut voor Toetsontwikkeling)
P.O. Box 1034
6801 M.G. Arnhem
The Netherlands

Generalitat de Catalunya
Direcció General de Política Lingüística
Mallorca, 272, 8a planta
08037 Barcelona
Spain

Danish Language Testing Consortium
Institut for Nordisk Filolog
Københavns Universitet
Njalsgade 80
København S
Denmark

Goethe-Institut
Helene-Weber-Allee 1
80637 München
Germany

Instituto Cervantes
Libreros, 23
28801 Alcalá de Henares
Madrid
Spain

ITÉ
(Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann)
31 Plás Mhic Liam
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Ireland

Universidade de Lisboa
Departamento de Língua e Cultura Portuguesa
Alameda da Universidade
1699 Lisboa
Portugal

Universidad de Salamanca
Cursos Internacionales
Patio de Escuelas Menores
37008 Salamanca
Spain

Università per Stranieri
Palazzo Gallenga
Piazza Fortebraccio
06122 Perugia
Italy

University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
1 Hills Road
Cambridge CB1 2EU
England

The recently introduced ALTE framework of levels of language proficiency showed how different language examinations can be grouped together at a series of levels. Three lower levels were described in detail, and an area of higher levels was outlined. This first description represented a stage in a process which is continuously developing, through the collaboration of all members of ALTE and with the help of funding from the European Commission's LINGUA programme.

Some Guidelines for Users

In this article certain aspects of the framework are considered in greater detail, and some of the questions which may arise concerning its use are addressed.

What are the ALTE levels?

The ALTE framework of levels groups together examinations in different languages to allow for comparisons to be made. The levels are defined by existing examinations, which are already provided by ALTE members. The framework represents an attempt to group together those which appear to be at similar levels of difficulty.

In many cases Waystage and Threshold were used as the basis of the specifications of the examinations at Levels One and Two.

What do the names of the three lower levels mean?

The two lowest levels of the framework are called 'Waystage User' and 'Threshold User'. These terms are taken from the work of the Council of Europe. 'Independent User' is a label given provisionally by ALTE to the third of the lower levels. For each of these levels a full description of what language learners can do has been compiled, giving details of the sorts of situation they can cope with, and the language they can both understand and produce, whether in written or spoken form.

How are the different examinations compared?

Examinations in different languages are grouped together by comparing their content and the demands they make on the people taking them.

Each examination is analysed by experts, who are from or acting on behalf of ALTE member organizations. This analysis is done using content checklists, which facilitate a detailed breakdown of the most important features of an examination, such as the elements of language knowledge which are being tested and the degree of skill required of candidates. In addition, experts compare what candidates have to produce in terms of speaking and writing.

continued overleaf

SECRETARIAT: Dr Michael Milanovic, University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 1, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU, England Tel: +44-223-553311 Fax: +44-223-460278

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What does it mean if two examinations are placed at the same level?

Each level covers a relatively broad ability band. When two examinations are placed at the same level it means that much of the content, skills and knowledge demanded of the candidates falls within a similar range of difficulty. This does not mean that the examinations are necessarily at *exactly* the same level of difficulty.

To what extent do the levels overlap?

Most of the examinations in the ALTE framework use a grading system. The grades may be expressed using letters, for example, with grades ranging from top grade A to bottom grade E. Alternatively, a grading system expressed in words may be used, for example, very good, good, fair, pass, fail.

This kind of approach means that candidates who pass any examination represent a *range of ability*, in other words, the candidate with a grade A / very good will have a higher level of ability than the candidate with a grade D / pass.

A consequence of this system is that for the examinations in any one language, there will be an overlap between adjacent levels in the framework with the examinations in that language at the level immediately above or below it. For example, a candidate who achieves grade A in a Level Two examination may in fact have a similar level of ability to someone who achieves grade D in a Level Three examination.

In general terms, however, a particular level in the framework is distinctly different from adjacent levels and is characterized by the language content and degree of skill represented by the middle of that band (a typical Level Three candidate will achieve a grade D / pass).

Language certificates as qualifications. Why are examinations at different levels accepted as qualifications for similar purposes?

When comparing the use of certificates in the different languages, it may appear that examinations which have been placed at *different* levels are accepted for the *same* kind of purpose, for example, as entrance qualifications for university courses.

Institutions which accept the certificates often place restrictions on the grade required for particular purposes. For example, a Level Four examination may be acceptable at *any* grade, whereas a grade A would be required if a Level Three examination were to be used for the purpose of university entrance. When comparing the use of the different language certificates as qualifications, it is necessary to take this into account.

How permanent is the framework and the position of examinations on it?

The framework as it appears at present has emerged from the initial stages of a long-term project, and should be regarded as provisional and open to change. This is particularly true of those examinations which are for the present grouped together under the heading of 'higher levels', but it is also true of the three more thoroughly differentiated lower levels. Later stages in the project are likely to confirm some aspects of the present framework and the position of examinations on it and also indicate areas where changes may be necessary.

What is the next stage in the project?

The next stage in the project involves the production of a set of 'can-do' statements. These statements provide definitions of what a language learner can actually do in terms of reading, writing, listening and speaking, within several different broad contexts such as professional life, social life, and for the purpose of study. Further details and examples of 'can-do' statements are given in the next article.

The statements, of which there will be hundreds, are grouped together at a series of levels which characterize advances in language learning ability. They will cover the entire range from beginner to advanced. A series of examination tasks which test the knowledge defined at the various levels will then be devised and produced in all the languages of ALTE members.

Can the levels of examinations in different languages be matched statistically?

The ALTE group is currently engaged in a research project to investigate this, and findings should be available in the future.

The ALTE framework in its present, provisional form is shown on the opposite page.

Levels of the ALTE framework

		LANGUAGE
LEVEL 1 Waystage User	Catalan	Certificat Internacional de Català. Nivell Bàsic (NB)
	Danish	Test 1 – Basic 1
	English	Key English Test (KET)
	Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 1 (CELI 1)
LEVEL 2 Threshold User	Catalan	Certificat Internacional de Català. Nivell Llindar (NL)
	Danish	Test 2 – Basic 2
	English	Preliminary English Test (PET)
	French	Certificat Elémentaire de Français Pratique (CEFP)
	German	Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaF)
	Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 2 (CELI 2)
	Portuguese	Certificado de Lingua Portuguesa (CELP)
	Spanish	Certificado Inicial de Español (CIE)
LEVEL 3 Independent User	English	First Certificate in English (FCE)
	French	Diplôme de Langue Française (DL)
	German	Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP)
	Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 3 (CELI 3)
	Spanish	Diploma Básico de Español (DBE)
HIGHER LEVELS	Danish	Danskprøve 2
	Dutch	Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal. Examen I (NT2-I) Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal. Examen II (NT2-II)
	English	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
	French	Diplôme Supérieur d'Etudes Françaises Modernes (DS)
	German	Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KDS) Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom (GDS)
	Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 4 (CELI 4) Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana. Livello 5 (CELI 5)
	Portuguese	Diploma de Lingua Portuguesa (DILP)
	Spanish	Diploma Superior de Español (DSE)

'Can-do' statements—

The ALTE framework project phase 2——

In establishing a framework of levels of language proficiency, ALTE members have committed themselves to a long-term project which consists of several separate phases, each of which will produce its own outcomes as well as feeding into the subsequent phase.

The first phase of the project will produce materials for analysing the content of examinations, and for training people who write test materials. During the second phase a series of 'can-do' statements will be written. As the name suggests, these statements define what a language learner can actually do within a certain broad context and a particular language skill.

'Can-do' statements play an important role in the development of the framework. The statements will be grouped together at levels characterized by significant advances in language learning ability. Test tasks will then be written to reflect these levels. The tasks will themselves be tried out by administering them to groups of students, after which they can be ranked according to difficulty and used in defining the various levels of the framework.

Practical applications——

The 'can-do' statements will also be available as a useful tool for anyone involved in teaching and testing language students. The statements can be used as a check-list of what learners might be expected to do at various levels, thus helping to define the stage they are at in learning a language. They can provide the basis for the development of test tasks, curricula and teaching materials.

'Can-do' statements can also provide the means of carrying out a linguistic audit, an enquiry into the current expertise and need for training in modern languages of employees in a company. They will be of benefit to training and personnel managers, in that they will provide readily understandable descriptions of language performance, which can be used in specifying requirements to language trainers, in formulating job descriptions and detailing language requirements for newly created posts. All the statements will be available for these purposes in a wide variety of the EU's languages, including several of those languages which are least frequently used and taught.

Some examples of sets of 'can-do' statements are now given, each with one or more statements at five levels of proficiency.

CATEGORY A - SOCIAL AND TOURIST 1
ACTIVITY: CASUAL SOCIALISING
SKILL: LISTENING/SPEAKING

1 CAN begin to express (dis)likes using standard expressions such as 'I don't like....', but cannot explain or justify these to any significant extent.

CAN express opinions of a factual nature in simple language.

CAN take part in a simple conversation of a factual nature.

2 CAN sustain a conversation of a factual nature for a limited period of time, but will not always express her/himself clearly, and there are likely to be breakdowns in communication.

CAN begin to deal with simple abstract/cultural topics, for example, music.

CAN express straightforward opinions, but not always with tact. Will not be able to discuss/argue a complex point of view.

3 CAN keep up an extended conversation of a mainly factual nature, although there will be occasional misunderstandings.

CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way, but if called upon to defend them may not be able to do so.

4 CAN keep up most conversations and discuss abstract/cultural topics with a good degree of fluency and range of expression.

CAN pick up nuances of meaning/opinion, but may still use occasional inappropriate language in sensitive or contentious conversations/discussions.

5 CAN participate in conversations/discussions with only the occasional, minor lapse of appropriacy/understanding.

Example 1 opposite gives a set of statements showing what learners at the various levels can be expected to do in the general context of 'social and tourist' language. The specific activity involved is 'casual socialising' using the skills of listening and speaking.

Example 2 shows what sort of things learners at various levels can be expected to read, in the context of their professional life. The specific activity involved is reading instructions and requests.

CATEGORY B - PROFESSIONAL **2**
ACTIVITY: INSTRUCTIONS AND REQUESTS
SKILL: READING

1 CAN understand simple regulations, for example, safety, when expressed in straightforward language, for example, commands; but is not likely to understand instructions that deal with, for example, conditions or advice.

2 CAN understand instructions and requests within own job area, given dictionary help.

CAN understand the gist of non-routine requests and instructions, but is likely to misunderstand if the product is unfamiliar or if the language used is not straightforward.

3 CAN carry out straightforward instructions and requests in the form of a continuous passage, provided that (s)he is familiar with the field.

CAN understand the intention of instructions, requests and regulations of a predictable kind, for example, terms of employment, but is likely to miss the point where these involve complex statements of warning, advice, options, etc.

4 CAN understand instructions and requests within own job area.

CAN understand the intention of instructions and requests outside own job area, but is likely to misunderstand the finer points where these are expressed in complex language.

5 CAN understand most instructions and requests with occasional dictionary help and understand most of what is written, provided that these are not expressed in specialist language, for example, legal regulations governing import/export.

Example 3 is a set of statements which detail what learners who are using the language for purposes of study can be expected to do within the skill of writing. The specific activity involved is taking notes.

CATEGORY C - STUDY **3**
ACTIVITY: TAKING NOTES
SKILL: WRITING

1 CAN note down simple, predictable instructions in, for example, a language school context where guidance is available. CANNOT make notes in the sense of listening to or reading a text and noting down salient points.

2 CAN begin to make simple notes on topics discussed at, for example, a seminar, provided that time is given to write them down. Such notes MAY NOT be clear or of much substantive use if required, for example, for revision purposes.

3 CAN make notes that will be of some limited use for essay or revision purposes, but IS NOT ABLE to make notes accurately unless time is given during, for example, a seminar to write them down without losing the thread of what is being discussed. The risk of inaccuracy remains.

4 CAN make straightforward notes that will be of reasonable use for essay or revision purposes, although these are NOT LIKELY to be comprehensive and the risk of missing salient points remains. IS NOT LIKELY to be able to take significant notes where the subject matter is novel, for example, at a lecture.

5 CAN make useful notes from lectures, seminars and textbooks, although there ARE LIKELY to be inaccuracies and misplaced emphases where the subject matter is complex and novel.

These are just three examples taken from over forty sets of 'can-do' statements developed so far.

'Can-do' statements are always expressed in clear, everyday language, and specialist terms used only in assessment are avoided. This makes them particularly useful to language learners and to employers or training personnel who are not themselves language testing experts. The statements make the task of identifying a language learner's current level of achievement and need for future training much easier.

Cito National Institute for Educational Measurement

A wish to provide access to high quality primary and secondary education, both in the public and the private sector, is traditional in the Netherlands. Education is described in the country's constitution as a matter of 'constant concern' to all governments. In furtherance of the aim of providing high quality education, CITO, the Institute for Educational Measurement, was founded in 1968 by the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science. It is one among a number of organizations set up at government request in order to support primary and secondary education and to assist schools in solving any problems they may have in meeting their educational objectives.

CITO is a large organization, employing over 300 people, who include educational theoreticians, experts in the various subject areas which are taught in schools and specialists in psychometric testing. It is closely linked to the Dutch public education system, which is characterized by a combination of a centralized educational policy with a great deal of autonomy at local or institutional level. The main responsibilities of CITO are the design and development of achievement and proficiency tests, the implementation of programme assessment and evaluation at both local and national levels, and the advancement of applied and theoretical research. To go into more detail, the specific tasks CITO is charged with carrying out are as follows: to provide services for the construction and administration of tests in support of educational practice; to contribute to the implementation and evaluation of the government's educational policy; to provide services, advice and research in support of the national secondary school examinations; to give advice and other forms of support to individual educational establishments up to and including university level; to carry out a programme of research and development relating to teaching and learning objectives, testing techniques and the theory of testing.

CITO Headquarters in Arnhem

CITO lays great emphasis on responding to the needs of pupils and parents as well as teachers and schools, and on giving them support, particularly at those times in a school career at which crucial choices have to be made. For example, at the age of twelve, Dutch children have to choose between different types of secondary education: schools offer courses with an emphasis on vocational, general or pre-university studies. CITO has designed a programme of assessment and guidance for pupils and parents which is used by more than half of all primary schools. At the other end of secondary school, CITO is also involved in the national examinations which pupils take before leaving school.

Schools and teachers can benefit from CITO's support services over many different levels, subjects and techniques, ranging from basic literacy tests and observation programmes in infant classes to the assessment of practical performance in chemistry, evaluation of art courses and tests of second language proficiency for foreign teaching assistants. There is an emphasis on working in close collaboration with teachers, and on introducing measurement theory and technology in a 'teacher friendly' manner. One recent example of this is the introduction of a series of item banks on computer disks. The accompanying computer program, called 'Toetshulp' or 'test help', enables teachers to put together their own tests by choosing from sets of carefully constructed test items. The program supports the selection of items, and allows for the computerized processing of test results.

Having been involved with school examinations for so long, CITO has at its disposal large collections of test items related to virtually all subjects taught in schools, and for all these items psychometric data is available, based on the results gained by various groups of candidates. This data feeds into research and development programmes which are carried out with the aim of improving education and educational measurement at national and international levels. Current research activities focus on a number of innovative areas, including item banking and the development of software for managing item banks, selecting items, constructing tests and analysing test results, interactive computer tests, computerized adaptive testing and tests on video disks.

CITO participates in a number of international projects commissioned or financed by the European Union, the Council of Europe and the World Bank, especially in the areas of vocational qualifications and language learning. CITO also provides a range of services to meet the needs of Ministries of Education, testing agencies and examination authorities throughout the world.

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Profile

CITO Language Testing Unit

Although activities connected with language testing are carried out in a number of different units at CITO, they are in the main concentrated in the Language Testing Unit. In this unit tests at a number of levels of proficiency are developed for a range of languages, including Dutch as a first and a second language, Arabic, English, French, German, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. Tests can be developed by the unit for a number of different purposes, such as research and programme evaluation, as well as school-based assessment and student placement.

In addition to services provided at national level, the Language Testing Unit works at an international level, and has devised tests for use in national examinations in several European countries.

The link between CITO and ALTE lies in the two examinations in Dutch as a second language which are produced by the Language Testing Unit in collaboration with ICE, the Bureau for Intercultural Evaluation. These examinations are both geared to the practical purpose of making it possible for non-native speakers of Dutch either to work or to study in the Netherlands. Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I is at an intermediate level, and those who pass it are able to gain access to various forms of education and training as well as to work in commerce and industry. Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen II is also at an intermediate level, but involves a higher level of abstraction and a wider vocabulary range. It qualifies successful candidates for entrance to higher education and the professions. Both examinations were devised at the request of the Dutch Education Secretary.

Dr John H. A. L. de Jong

Dr John H.A.L. de Jong is head of the Language Testing Unit at CITO, with a staff of thirty people working with him. Before joining CITO in 1977, Dr de Jong taught French in secondary schools for seven years. During his career as a teacher, he gained an MA in Applied Linguistics at Leiden University. After he joined CITO, he studied Educational Measurement at Twente University, and published a doctoral thesis entitled *Defining a Variable of Foreign Language Ability: An Application of Item Response Theory*. Since then he has published over thirty articles on language testing in Dutch, English and French, has been guest editor for the international journals AILA Review and System, and has co-edited two books, *Individualizing the Assessment of Language Ability*, which was published in 1990 by Multilingual Matters, and *The Construct of Language Ability*, published in 1992 by John Benjamins.

His particular interest is the application of Item Response Theory to the measurement of levels of language ability. He is keen to promote the professionalization of language testing, and is an active member of a number of international organizations in the fields of applied linguistics, educational measurement and language testing.

In any spare time left over from these professional interests, Dr de Jong enjoys baking his own bread, working in the garden and tinkering with his 1954 model Citroën.

Ms Marie-Christine Sprengers

Ms Marie-Christine Sprengers studied Dutch literature and language at the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands, taking a special teaching option as part of her course. From 1982 to 1986 she taught in several secondary schools.

In 1986 she joined CITO's examinations department as a subject specialist for Dutch, and for seven years worked as coordinator of the construction of the national examinations in Dutch as a native language for general and vocational secondary education. These examinations consist of tests in reading and writing. Ms Sprengers is the author of several publications related to these examinations.

Since November 1993, Marie-Christine Sprengers has been coordinating the CITO team responsible for the construction of a variety of tests in Dutch as a second language, including the national examinations in speaking and listening.

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The 8th Meeting of ALTE

The 8th meeting of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) took place at Beekbergen, near Arnhem in the Netherlands, on April 15, 16 and 17, 1994. It was hosted by CITO, and a welcoming address was given by Dr Anton Luijten, Head of the Division of Secondary Education at CITO.

The meeting was attended by representatives of language testing organizations in ten European languages. ALTE now has eleven members, having been joined by ITÉ, The Linguistics Institute of Ireland.

Other European Groupings

Several other associations besides ALTE bring together organizations in various European countries with a common interest in some aspect of language teaching or testing. Some information on two of them is given below:

EAQUALS

EAQUALS, the European Association for Quality Language Services, is a pan-European association of schools and institutions where languages are taught to non-native speakers.

The association operates a rigorous inspection scheme, which is chaired by Frank Heyworth, Vice-Director of Eurocentres, who holds the position of Inspections Officer in EAQUALS. The EAQUALS quality control system bases its standards on a Code of Conduct which includes a Student Charter and Staff Charter. EAQUALS has received generous support from the Brussels-based LINGUA programme.

A presentation was made to the Arnhem meeting by Mr Peter Brown, Director of the British School of Trieste and Chair of EAQUALS, in which he outlined the aims and objectives of the association, and gave an update on the progress of the inspection scheme.

Further information can be obtained by contacting the EAQUALS Information Officer:

Mr Patrick Clare, Director
The British Institute of Rome
Via IV Fontane 109 Fax: +39 6 4815549
00184 Rome
Italy

LangCred

LangCred is a European grouping, the aim of which is to describe and classify the foreign language examinations which are available in Europe. It attempts to assign examinations to a series of levels which are based in part on already existing levels such as Waystage and Threshold, and in part on newly defined levels.

The emphasis of the LangCred project is on the use of foreign languages for vocational purposes.

Further information can be obtained by contacting:

CITO
Nieuwe Oeverstraat 65
6801 MG Arnhem
The Netherlands

ITÉ Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann
The Linguistics Institute of Ireland

ITE, the latest organization to become a member of ALTE, was founded in 1972 as a national centre for research on the teaching and maintenance of languages in Ireland, with special reference to Irish.

Its thirty members of staff work in a variety of disciplines, including sociology, linguistics, pedagogy, materials development and test construction. ITE's test programme has been concerned mainly with Irish in primary and post-primary schools, where the language is taught to all pupils. In recent times it has started to develop tests in Irish and foreign languages for adult and continuing education.

As an essential element of Irish cultural identity, Irish is greatly valued both in Ireland and around the world, wherever communities of Irish descent exist. Certification for the many courses offered in adult and continuing education programmes has become a priority, and examinations for adult learners at all the ALTE levels of proficiency are planned.

ITE's representative in ALTE is Dr Eoghan Mac Aogáin, the Director of the Institute. For further information, he can be contacted at:

ITE
Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann
31 Plás Mhic Liam
Baile Átha Cliath 2 Tel: 353 1 676 5489
Ireland Fax: 353 1 661 0004

The Annual Convention of TESOL France will be held in Paris on October 28, 29 and 30, 1994. For further information, please contact:

Suzanne Burdon
16 av des Sablons
91350 Grigny
France

Tel/fax: 33 1 69258382
Linda Thalman
Email: Thalman@nea.fr

Next meeting

It was confirmed that the next ALTE meeting will be held in Salamanca from 18 to 20 November 1994.

ALTE NEWS
DEC. 1994
Vol. 3, No. 2

ALTE receives LINGUA funding for 'can-do' project

The current round of grants given under the European Commission's LINGUA programme has brought a third grant for ALTE, the second which is linked specifically to a stage in ALTE's long-term aim of establishing a framework of levels of language proficiency for the comparison of qualifications in various European languages.

This aim is being realised by means of a series of one-year projects, each of which has an independent outcome, or outcomes, as well as forming one phase of the larger project. The progress of the first of these projects, the outcomes of which will be an instrument for the content analysis of testing materials and a set of materials for the guidance of test developers and item writers, is described in more detail on page 2.

The second of the one-year projects is to produce a set of 'can-do' statements, which, as the name suggests, are straightforward and easily understandable descriptions of what exactly a language learner is able to do at different levels of proficiency. They are linked to the everyday demands of life in the spheres of social and tourist activities, work and study, and to the practical necessities of language use. In examples relating to the general area of 'day-to-day survival' in a host family, for instance, a learner at a low level of competence:

CAN sustain a conversation of a basic factual nature, where, for example, the topic is her/his home country, family, school, etc., but CANNOT maintain such a conversation for long.

At a higher level, the learner:

CAN keep up a casual conversation for a reasonable period of time, provided that this is of a mainly factual nature. CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way, but if called upon to defend them MAY NOT be able to do so.

At a higher level still, he or she:

CAN participate in casual conversations/discussions with only the occasional minor lapse of appropriacy/understanding.

Some examples of 'can-do' statements were given in greater detail in the last edition of ALTE News (June 1994).

The 'can-do' project will result in the provision of a useful tool, with a variety of significant applications for those involved in teaching and testing language students. The statements can be used as a checklist of what language users can do, and thus define the stage they are at in the process of learning a language. They can provide a basis for the development of diagnostic test tasks, activity-based curricula and teaching materials. They also provide the means for carrying out an activity-based linguistic audit, which will be of use to those concerned with language training in companies. The statements will be of benefit to training and personnel managers in that

continued overleaf

MEMBERS:

Alliance Française
101 bd Raspail
75270 Paris
Cedex 06
France

CITO
Instituut voor
Toetsontwikkeling
P.O. Box 1034
6801 M.G. Arnhem
The Netherlands

Generalitat de Catalunya
Direccio General de
Política Lingüística
Mallorca, 272, 8a planta
08037 Barcelona
Spain

Danish Language Testing Consortium
Institut for Nordisk Filologi
Københavns Universitet
Njalsgade 80
København S
Denmark

Goethe-Institut
Helene-Weber-Allee 1
80637 München
Germany

Instituto Cervantes
Libreros, 23
28801 Alcalá de Henares
Madrid
Spain

ITÉ
Institiúid Teangeolaíochta
Éireann
31 Pás Mhic Liam
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Ireland

Universidade de Lisboa
Departamento de Língua
e Cultura Portuguesa
Alameda da Universidade
1699 Lisboa
Portugal

Universidad de Salamanca
Cursos Internacionales
Palo de Escuelas Menores
37008 Salamanca
Spain

Università per Stranieri
Palazzo Gallenga
Piazza Fortebraccio
06122 Perugia
Italy

University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
1 Hills Road
Cambridge CB1 2EU
United Kingdom

SECRETARIAT: Dr. Michael Milanovic, University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 1, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU, United Kingdom. Tel: +44-1223-553311 Fax: +44-1223-460278

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continued from page 1

they will provide readily understandable descriptions of performance, which can be used in specifying requirements to language trainers, in formulating job descriptions and specifying language requirements for new posts. All the statements will be available in a wide variety of EU languages, including several of those least widely used and taught.

By the end of the project the statements will have been grouped together provisionally at the 'critical levels' at which significant advances in language learning appear to take place. The final stage of the process will begin with the development of a series of test tasks which reflect the levels at which the 'can-do' statements have been placed. These tasks will be written by people trained to do so using the materials for the guidance of item writers which were produced in an earlier project, and analysed with the aid of the instrument for content analysis also produced at that stage. After pretesting, they will be ranked in terms of difficulty, calibrated and used in the establishment of the framework of levels of language performance.

An update on the progress of the current ALTE project

During 1994, members of ALTE worked on two sets of materials, both of which are now approaching completion in a variety of the languages of the European Union.

The instrument for content analysis is necessary to the ALTE framework project at the stage where 'can-do' statements have been written and provisionally grouped at critical levels, and tasks are then written to reflect these levels. It is necessary to analyse these tasks in great detail in order to ensure both that they are viable test tasks and that they are placed at the correct level.

Development of an instrument of content analysis has been based on work done on descriptive models of language ability and use (e.g. Canale and Swain, 1980, Bachman, 1991). Bachman's model shows aspects of ability - which he labels 'language knowledge', 'knowledge schemata', 'affective schemata' and 'characteristics of the language use context' - interacting with 'assessment strategies', 'goal-setting strategies' and 'planning strategies' to produce effective use of language.

Within this type of model, the areas which can be focused on as possible to describe are language knowledge and characteristics of the language use context. Examples of areas which can be described are:

characteristics of the test environment (e.g. place, personnel, time of testing);

characteristics of the test rubric (e.g. sequence and relative importance of parts);

characteristics of the input (e.g. format, language);

characteristics of the expected response (e.g. format, language).

These areas can be broken down further, so that, for example, the format of input is described in terms of all item types used. Thus a detailed description of the test materials can be given.

For the purpose of describing test tasks for the ALTE project, separate checklists have been devised, each covering the area of skill normally covered by one component of a test - reading, listening, structural competence, writing and speaking. Each list is very detailed. To take the list for describing listening tasks as an example, different sections deal with the text, the particular language ability tested, the speakers, quality of recording, video (if used), task, expected response and marking. The section on the text includes questions about the following: the length of the text, how many times it is heard, the type of text, the speaker's main intention, the target listener (to the original), and the topic area.

However, their use in the ALTE project is not the only reason for producing these checklists, and the list mentioned above also exists in a fuller version which could be used to analyse one version of the listening component of any language test. This checklist begins with a general description of the component, with questions on details such as the number of tasks and items in each section, and covers presentation and layout and instructions and rubrics, before going on to questions on individual tasks and items. A brief general checklist is also available, which can be used for describing one version of any language examination in terms of a general impression.

These materials will eventually be available for use by any institution or company which has an interest in evaluating teaching or testing materials.

The materials for the guidance of item writers, similarly, will be available and of interest to anybody who needs to develop a new test or to write materials for an existing one. This course provides an extremely comprehensive account of the whole process of test development and production, including much practical advice and exercises. It is divided into four self-contained modules. The first is concerned with the models of language ability which underlie the form taken by tests, and includes a historical account of the development of current views on testing. The second module deals with the process of production for a new or existing test, covering all the areas from initial planning and drafting of specifications to item banking and test construction. The third module looks at the various item types available, their advantages and disadvantages and typical uses, while the fourth covers issues connected with marking and fairness towards candidates.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA

The Patio de Escuelas Menores of the University of Salamanca

In the past....

The city of Salamanca, in the west of Spain, is one of the oldest university towns in Europe. Founded in 1218 by Alfonso IX of León, it was one of the *studia* set up throughout Europe in the late middle ages for the teaching of theology, the arts, law and medicine. When the kingdoms of Castile and León were united, the university became a centre of scholarship for Castile, and later for the whole of Spain. The *studium* enjoyed the protection of Alfonso X, known as 'Alfonso the Wise', who gave it the official status of a university by conferring a statute on it in 1254. Ecclesiastical recognition followed immediately after this, in 1255, when Pope Alexander IV granted the University of Salamanca its own seal and gave universal validity to its degrees (*ius ubique docendi*).

By the end of the 15th century and throughout the 16th, the university had the support of the Catholic monarchs, who gave it new privileges and statutes, making it one of the most important and advanced centres of higher education in the world. Columbus submitted his plans to its teachers for their opinions; an energetic defence of the rights of the American 'Indians' and of equality between human beings was issued by the school of Father Francisco de Vitoria, where the concept of international law had its origins; the statutes of the University of Salamanca were taken as a model when, in 1551, the first universities to be founded in the New World opened their doors in Lima and in Mexico.

Innovative ideas in science, such as those of Vesalius in anatomy and Copernicus in astronomy, were welcomed in Salamanca. Many of the great figures of Spanish humanism were associated either as teachers or as students with the university, among them Fray Luis de León and Elio Antonio de Nebrija, whose *Gramática de la Lengua Castellana* (Castilian Grammar) - the first ever study of its kind of a vernacular language - was produced on the university's printing presses.

...and present

The present-day University of Salamanca teaches 30,000 undergraduate students, who study in fifteen faculties and nine university colleges, which are located in Avila, Zamora and Béjar as well as in Salamanca itself. More than thirty degree courses are offered, in a range of disciplines including the humanities and social sciences, law, engineering and the experimental, biological and health sciences. In addition to this, some 5,000 foreign students are enrolled on courses in Spanish language and culture. Forty-eight university departments and three institutes are engaged in research and development activities, and over 1,600 students are registered for programmes of study at the doctoral level. The university employs around 1,000 tenured teaching staff, with a further 500 on an untenured basis, as well as almost 300 assistant teachers and more than 100 research fellows.

The university participates fully in the educational programmes of the European Union, such as the III Base Programme and COMETT, the Community Programme in Education and Training for Technology. It is an enthusiastic participant in the exchange programmes of the EU, with 600 students currently studying throughout Europe under the ERASMUS, LINGUA and TEMPUS programmes. Numerous major cooperation agreements have been established with foreign universities, as well as with other institutions, foundations, businesses and corporations, in both the public and the private sectors.

The Cursos Internacionales department

The eight fundamental aims of the University of Salamanca are set out in the second article of the university statutes. The fourth of these aims is 'to promote, increase and spread the Spanish language'. The promotion of the Spanish language is an express function of the university; it is no coincidence that the first grammatical study of a language ever produced in the vernacular, Elio Antonio de Nebrija's *Gramática de la Lengua Castellana*, was printed in 1492 on the University of Salamanca's presses.

Students of the Cursos Internacionales department

This objective of spreading the use of Spanish language and raising the status of Spanish culture abroad, is fulfilled largely through the work of Cursos Internacionales. For more than thirty years, this department has been promoting Spanish, both as a means of facilitating international communication and understanding among people of different nations, and as a language and culture worthy of study for its own sake. The success achieved by Cursos Internacionales is demonstrated by the thousands of foreign students who come to study in Salamanca, by the number of collaborative arrangements set up between Cursos Internacionales and universities and institutions of higher education all over the world, and by the formidable international reputation the department has established for the teaching and study of all aspects of Spanish as a Foreign Language.

Cursos Internacionales offers general courses in Spanish language and culture at all levels of language competence, and in addition to this there are courses for special interest groups such as teachers of Spanish and philologists. All courses are available throughout the year.

As well as teaching, the university is involved in a number of other projects related to Spanish as a Foreign Language. One of these is *Viaje al Español*, a multimedia course in Spanish as a Foreign Language produced by RTVE (the Spanish Broadcasting Organization) and supported by various government bodies. Another is the international award made annually for an outstanding contribution to Hispanic studies to a Hispanist whose native tongue is not Spanish, the Elio Antonio de Nebrija Prize. This prize is sponsored by the University of Salamanca. Finally, the university is responsible for developing, setting, marking and evaluating the language examinations known as the Diplomas in Spanish as a Foreign Language (DELE) which are available worldwide, and which are issued and certified by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science.

The number of professional people working for Cursos Internacionales varies throughout the year from fifty to 300 during the busiest period, from June to September. Of these employees, forty are engaged in work directly related to the Diplomas in Spanish as a Foreign Language, in administration, examination production, research, marking, evaluation, computer services, seminars and workshops, examiner training, and in maintaining contacts with the Ministry of Education, the Instituto Cervantes, examination centres and other international organizations.

Cursos Internacionales and tests of Spanish as a Foreign Language

At a time when no other organization in Spain had recognized the need for certification of courses in Spanish for non-native speakers, and there was little interest within the world of Hispanic studies in assessment or in objective measuring procedures, Cursos Internacionales was already accumulating experience and developing expertise in language testing. The department prepared its own tests for the purposes of placement and diagnosis and for assessing achievement, and issued its own certificates.

This accumulation of experience in testing was one of the factors which led the University of Salamanca to set up its system of Diplomas in Spanish as a Foreign Language. Other factors were the presence of a large testing population made up of the many foreign students who come to Salamanca to learn Spanish, the availability within the university of a team of experts with training in the field of language testing, the increasing demand for examinations in Spanish and consequently for internationally recognized certification, and the passing of the *Ley de Reforma Universitaria* (Law for University Reform) which allowed the Spanish universities to issue their own diplomas.

The demand for certification was confirmed by a market survey carried out in 1986 by the Spanish Ministry of Culture. Independent responses to this finding came almost simultaneously from two official quarters: in 1987 Cursos Internacionales introduced the *Diploma de español de la Universidad de*

Salamanca, a high level diploma demanding a level of proficiency which approaches native-speaker competence, while in 1988 an intermediate level examination, the *Diploma básico de español como lengua extranjera* was brought out by the Ministry of Education and Science, acting under royal decree.

Shortly after this, Cursos Internacionales brought out an intermediate level examination, the *Certificado de español de la Universidad de Salamanca*, while the Ministry began work on an advanced level examination. This concurrence of interests and objectives seemed to indicate a need for an agreement between the two institutions, and this was achieved in 1990, with the signing of a cooperation agreement. Two aspects of this should be mentioned: Cursos Internacionales agreed to discontinue its own diplomas and the Ministry of Education and Science agreed to entrust Cursos Internacionales with the whole process of producing, marking and evaluating its examinations, and with all the technical, academic and linguistic aspects of the tests.

Since this agreement, there have been two further developments. First, an elementary level diploma, the *Certificado inicial de español como lengua extranjera*, has been introduced, and had its first administration in May 1994. Secondly, all matters relating to the external management and administration of the examinations have been delegated by the Ministry to the Instituto Cervantes, an institution which was founded in 1991 with the aim of promoting the linguistic and cultural heritage of the people of all Spanish-speaking countries.

To summarize the present situation, there are now three separate institutions, the Ministry of Education and Science, the University of Salamanca and the Instituto Cervantes, involved in different ways in the *Diplomas de español como lengua extranjera*, each with its own clearly defined area of responsibility. There are also three examinations in Spanish as a Foreign Language, the newly introduced *Certificado inicial de español* at an elementary level, and the well established *Diploma básico de español* and *Diploma superior de español* at intermediate and advanced levels.

The personnel currently responsible for matters related to the examinations in Spanish as a Foreign Language at Cursos Internacionales are the Director, José J. Gómez Asencio, Juan Miguel Prieto, who is Coordinator of Certificates and Diplomas, Alberto Buitrago, Coordinator of the Evaluation Unit, Clara María de Vega Santos, who represents Cursos Internacionales as a member of ALTE, and José de Francisco Franco, who is in charge of Administration and Accounts. These people head a large and diverse team consisting, among others, of teachers of Spanish as a Foreign Language, test item writers, researchers, examiners, computer specialists, administrators, teaching staff from the Spanish Language Department of the University of Salamanca, experts in evaluation and statistics from the Departments of Education and Statistics and consultants from other universities.

The 9th meeting of ALTE

The 9th meeting of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) took place in Salamanca, Spain on November 18, 19 and 20, 1994. It was hosted by the Cursos Internacionales department of the Universidad de Salamanca, and the meeting was opened with addresses from Dr. José J. Gómez Asencio, Director of Cursos Internacionales, Professor Julio Fermoso, the Rector of the University, and a representative of the Ministry of Education.

Representatives of ALTE member organizations at the Salamanca meeting

The meeting was attended by representatives of eleven organizations, which between them provide language testing in ten European languages. As is usually the case, the meeting was composed of a mixture of business discussions, presentations by representatives of external organizations working in the same field as members, and workshop sessions related to the various ongoing ALTE projects.

Among the issues on the agenda was the future development of ALTE in the context of a European Union which is shortly to admit three new members and seems certain to extend its membership further within the next few years. As an EEIG, ALTE is open to applications for membership from EU-based organizations which provide language testing for foreign learners, and could grow within the next few years to a point where it will be necessary to reconsider the format and procedure followed at meetings. Conditions for membership where more than one organization represents testing in a particular language is another area under discussion, as ALTE grows in size.

Workshop sessions focused on two stages in the long-term framework project. The content analysis checklists, which form one of the outcomes of the first one-year phase, have been translated from English into the other project languages, and have been used in the analysis of some tests with encouraging results. The materials for the guidance of item writers, similarly, have reached the stage of translation into a variety of languages. Members of ALTE are now concentrating their efforts on refining and expanding the series of 'can-do' statements which will be the outcome of the second one-year phase of the project.

Work is also proceeding on a multilingual glossary of terms used in testing. This project has grown out of the practical needs of ALTE members, who have sometimes experienced difficulties in knowing how to translate technical and semi-technical terminology from one of the ten languages used within ALTE into another. The glossary will include simple and commonly-used terms such as 'item', 'candidate' and 'assessor', as well as terms from statistical analysis such as 'bimodal distribution' and 'chi-square'.

PRESENTATIONS

The Salamanca meeting of ALTE was unusual in that a large number of presentations by representatives of external organizations were made to the meeting. These included an account of some new developments in language skills assessment in the USA given by Dr. Eduardo Cascallar of the Center for the Advancement of Language Learning, and presentations of the work of three organizations, all of which provide language testing for foreign learners. A talk on Examination Centre Policies by Michael Jackson, the Director of Marketing at UCLES, was also part of the programme. The content of some of these presentations is summarized below.

Language skills assessment: new developments and programs in the USA

Dr. Eduardo Cascallar, Coordinator of Testing and Research for the Center for the Advancement of Language Learning (CALL), described the unified testing plan currently being developed in order to provide an integrated language testing system for a number of US government agencies, each of which has in the past devised its own means of language testing.

The unified plan will provide a common core of definitions of proficiency and common rating scales, to which the various government agencies may add components which reflect their own particular concerns. The four skills will be tested, with the additional option of translation, and a candidate profile will be produced.

A test of speaking is currently being developed, and will be in use by October 1996. Tests of the other skills will follow this. Training of oral assessors is extremely thorough and intensive; there is a one-month training program. This is of particular importance, as the need for assessment in any one of around 145 languages may arise, and assessors for little-known languages often have to be recruited from a population among whom nobody with a background in language teaching or testing can be found. Training is carried out in English, and the scales used in assessment are also in English only, so assessors must possess some degree of bilingualism.

Oral assessments are made with the aid of a Rating Factor Grid, which provides definitions of what speakers can do at six levels of competence (0-5) in the following sub-skills: interactive comprehension, structural control (which includes cohesion as well as grammatical accuracy), lexical control, delivery (pronunciation and fluency), social/cultural appropriateness and communication strategies. For example, at level 2 in social/cultural appropriateness, a candidate is:

> Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. [Misses cultural and local references. May require a native speaker to adjust to his/her limitations in some ways.]

Assessors also have for their guidance an Elicitation Aid, which details the topics and genres which a candidate must be able to discuss to reach each successive level, and Language Skills Level Descriptions, which provide a summary of the competence expected at each level.

Each candidate is rated by a team of two assessors, each of whom uses the Rating Factor Grid independently to assign a score to each sub-skill. The final score given is achieved, not by conflating the two scores, but by returning to the descriptors for guidance. The assessors discuss their opinions and try to achieve a reconciled score, but their separate assessments are also recorded. If they cannot agree, a third rating is made, based on the video which is made of each test. In general, assessors are trained to place the candidate at the lowest level of competence achieved, even if some features of a higher level are present.

The extremely detailed descriptions of competence at a series of levels was of particular relevance to issues ALTE members are working on, and this account of CALL's work provided a valuable insight not only into techniques of oral assessment but also the issue of providing descriptions of levels of linguistic competence to underpin the ALTE 'can-do' statements.

The University of Athens inter-departmental programme for Greek as a Foreign Language

Professor Sophia Papaefthymiou-Lytra described the work being done at the University of Athens on the teaching and testing of Greek as a Foreign Language. Under an inter-departmental

programme, courses in modern Greek are made available to learners such as the foreign students who come to Greece through the Council of Europe ERASMUS programme, and foreigners who have settled in Greece. Teacher training courses are also provided.

The teaching programme is complemented by a series of examinations in Greek as a Foreign Language which are being developed. In addition to the target groups for teaching mentioned above, the examinations will be available to learners of Greek outside the country, and to descendants of the Greek diaspora, who have a special interest in maintaining their skills in this language. The first of these examinations, which will be at ALTE Level Two, is currently at the trialling stage, and will be live by the end of 1995. It will be followed by a Level One examination, and then by further examinations.

The Level Two examination, which consists of sub-tests of reading and usage, writing, listening and speaking, is based on the Greek version of the Threshold specification, which has also been developed by the University of Athens, and which is shortly to be published. The Greek version of Threshold will differ slightly from other versions, in that considerably more emphasis is to be placed on the cultural aspects of language competence.

De Nederlandse Taalunie - The Dutch Language Union

Linde van den Bosch, who is a project manager with the Dutch Language Union, gave an account of the work of this organization, which aims to maintain and enhance the position of Dutch as a European language which brings together 21 million native speakers throughout the Netherlands and Belgium. The DLU is an inter-governmental agency, formalizing collaboration between Dutch-speakers in these two countries over issues such as conventions of grammar and orthography in order to ensure that the language remains a unified entity across political borders.

The DLU is concerned with promoting all aspects of language use, including drama and literature, and its work is supported by advisers from the arts and the media of the two countries concerned. Support for Dutch in the field of education includes an extensive programme of contacts between teachers at primary and secondary level in the Netherlands and Belgium, and grants for students of Dutch at the level of higher education.

Examinations in Dutch as a Foreign Language at three levels were introduced during the 70s and 80s, in order to meet the need for certification outside Dutch-speaking countries. Information on the examinations was provided by Hilde Bosmans of the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve, where they are set and marked.

The largest proportion of candidates for these examinations are native speakers of French, followed by speakers of Indonesian, English and German. For several years the exams were used for testing foreign residents seeking entry to various types of training or higher education or to work in the Netherlands or Belgium, but that function has now been taken over by CITO, which developed its two 'Nederlands als Tweede Taal' certificates for that express purpose. A further harmonization of the two systems of examinations is planned for the future, so that a system of complementary examinations in Dutch becomes available, and candidates are able to choose the one most appropriate to their needs.

The Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband

The work of this organization, which provides adult education classes through a network of 1,060 municipal adult education centres and 4,200 local VHS branches, was outlined for ALTE by two of its senior administrators, Hans Teichmann, who is based at the Pedagogical Headquarters of the DVV in Frankfurt, and Hermann Kumpfmüller, Director of Bavarian Adult Education.

The classes provided by the DVV are in a variety of subjects other than languages, and much of the language teaching is uncertificated, but some forty-two certificated courses have been developed, of which twenty-six are language courses. In future there is expected to be an increasing emphasis on languages for vocational purposes, with tests at the three lower ALTE levels.

The DVV is involved in the production of two examinations in German as a Foreign Language. One of these, the Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaF), which is at ALTE Level Two, is produced in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut. The other, the Grundbaustein, is at ALTE Level One. It consists of multiple choice items which are electronically marked, communicative tasks, listening comprehension and reading comprehension. It is often used in testing the language competence of foreign workers in Germany and Germans from the former eastern bloc.

Towards a European framework: ALTE, LangCred and the Council of Europe together at EAIE

The European Association for International Education (EAIE) held its sixth international conference in London on 24, 25 and 26 November 1994. Among a number of sessions and presentations was one entitled Language Testing in an International Context: towards a European Framework. This session consisted of three twenty-minute presentations, and dealt with the notion of a European framework of language proficiency. Each speaker described an area of ongoing international cooperation with particular reference to the testing and certification of European languages.

The three speakers were John Trim, who spoke on the Council of Europe Framework, and representatives from two organizations within ALTE, John de Jong from CITO, who presented the LangCred project, and Michael Milanovic from UCLES, who described the work of ALTE.

The Council of Europe framework

This wide-ranging project is designed to provide a guide to those involved in all aspects of language education. In his presentation, Dr. Trim outlined the objectives of the Council, putting the project into context.

For the past thirty years, the Council of Europe has been promoting the reform of modern languages teaching in its member states as a means of encouraging international understanding and cooperation. In particular, its programme aims to make all sections of the population capable of managing the business of everyday living and of exchanging experience and opinions face to face when in another country. The goal may be a modest level of competence for those whose requirements are related to occasional visits to another country, or progressively higher levels for L2 speakers whose needs are related to residence or professional use. Educational reform is a lengthy process requiring educational authorities, course designers, materials developers, teacher trainers, teachers and learners to work together with the sympathetic understanding of parents, employers and political bodies long enough for reforms to take full effect in the classroom. Examinations and qualifications have a key role in setting objectives, motivating students and monitoring performance.

A new level above *Threshold*

The *Threshold Level* publications from the Council of Europe have played a valuable part in providing the 'partners for learning' with a common frame of reference, first for English, and currently for eleven European languages, with as many more under development or planned. After an updating of *Waystage* and *Threshold* in 1990, work is now underway to apply the same concepts at a higher level than *Threshold* and also to develop a more inclusive framework by reference to which practitioners of all kinds can present curricular guidelines, teaching materials, examination syllabuses, etc. in a coherent and transparent form. Like *Waystage* and *Threshold*, the new language specification is to be developed by Dr. Trim and Professor J.A. van Ek.

As many of the language examinations provided by members of ALTE are to some extent based on or influenced by the *Waystage* and *Threshold* specifications, and these terms have been adopted for use in referring to two of the lower levels of the ALTE framework, it is of great interest to member organizations of ALTE that further work of this type is in progress.

ALTE is pleased to be able to associate itself with this important new development in language teaching and testing by contributing to its funding.

Future meetings

It was confirmed that the next ALTE meeting will be held in Copenhagen from 28 to 30 April 1995.

A further project meeting will be held in Cambridge on 16 and 17 February 1995.

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MEMBERS:

Alliance Française
101, bd Raspail
75270 Paris
Cedex 06
France

CITO
(Instituut voor
Toetsontwikkeling)
P.O. Box 1034
6801 M.G. Arnhem
The Netherlands

Danish Language Testing Consortium
Institut for Nordisk Filologi
Københavns Universitet
Njalsgade 80
København S
Denmark

Generalitat de Catalunya
Direcció General de
Política Lingüística
Mallorca, 272, 8a planta
08037 Barcelona
Spain

Goethe-Institut
Helene-Weber-Allee 1
80637 München
Germany

Instituto Cervantes
Libreros, 23
28801 Alcalá de Henares
Madrid
Spain

ITÉ
(Institiúid Teangeolaíochta
Éireann)
31 Pás Mhic Liam
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Ireland

Universidad de Salamanca
Cursos Internacionales
Patio de Escuelas Menores
37008 Salamanca
Spain

Universidade de Lisboa
Departamento de Língua
e Cultura Portuguesa
Alameda da Universidade
1699 Lisboa
Portugal

Università per Stranieri
Palazzo Gallenga
Piazza Fortebraccio 4
06122 Perugia
Italy

University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
1 Hills Road
Cambridge CB1 2EU
United Kingdom

ALTE develops a multi-lingual glossary of testing terms

Since 1990, ALTE members have been meeting at least twice a year to discuss matters related to all aspects of testing adult learners of foreign languages. Needs have been identified, and an extensive project undertaken, which will not only provide a framework of levels within which tests of different languages can be compared with each other, but is also producing sets of materials - content analysis checklists, item writer guidance materials and 'can-do' statements - which are of practical use to those engaged in language testing. These developments have been reported on in previous editions of ALTE News.

At an early stage in the course of doing this work, the difficulties of talking about language testing issues in the range of languages of ALTE member organizations became apparent: in particular, it was sometimes difficult to know how to translate a term from one European language into another. It seemed likely that ALTE members were not the only people involved in language testing to have encountered this difficulty, and that any attempt to tackle it would be of benefit both within ALTE and more widely.

It was clear that there was an issue here which was closely connected with collaboration between language testers in different countries. As one of the stated aims of ALTE is 'to collaborate on joint projects and in the exchange of ideas and know-how' it seemed appropriate for ALTE to address the issue. At the same time, it was found necessary when ALTE Documents 1 and 2 were published to add short glossaries of testing terminology for the use of native speakers, and the idea emerged of producing a larger glossary, of use both to those using one language and to those interested in translating or comparing terminology across languages.

continued overleaf

ALTE

Continued from page 1

Initial work on this project was based on existing lists of language testing terms, including a list compiled by CITO, the Dutch member organization of ALTE. This was translated into English, the working language for establishing which terms should be included in the list. All the other language versions will be produced by translating from the English list. The early stages of work involved adding to, and deleting from, the CITO list. Other dictionaries and glossaries were consulted in order to do this – among them a draft of the *Language Testing Dictionary* currently being prepared for publication by Alan Davies and colleagues at the University of Melbourne, Gilbert de Landsheere's *Dictionnaire de l'évaluation et de la recherche en éducation* (Paris, 1992) and the *Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology* by W. Paul Vogt (Sage Publications, 1993). Glossaries and indexes contained in some standard textbooks on language teaching and testing, such as Grant Henning's *A Guide to Language Testing* (Newbury House, 1987) and *Testing for Language Teachers* by Arthur Hughes, were also consulted. Additionally, terms were suggested by members.

In 1994 an application for funding under the European Commission's Lingua Programme was made and accepted, putting the glossary project on a more secure footing by providing the means of holding project meetings at which work done by individual member organizations could be drawn together. The development of the glossary is being funded by the Lingua Programme throughout 1995. So far, one special project meeting, involving all partners in the project, has been held. Definitions of terms are being checked and approved by representatives of all member organizations of ALTE, with added guidance from university-based experts in language testing acting as external advisors.

It became clear at an early stage in the development of the glossary that partners in the project wanted it to be of use to the widest possible range of people, to include classroom teachers and others whose primary interest is not in testing, as well as those directly involved in producing or administering tests. The list of terms thus includes many basic terms, such as *question paper*, and the names of commonly used item and task types - *multiple choice*, *dictation*, *composition*, *cloze test*, and so on - as well as more technical vocabulary - *kurtosis*, *covariance*, *coefficient alpha*, etc. Terms such as *candidate* and *examination* are present, not because a definition in any one language is useful so much as because users may need to know the equivalents in other languages.

In writing definitions, an effort is being made to keep them brief and clearly expressed. This results in some simplified definitions of complex areas, and in such cases suggestions for further reading which will add detail to the outline provided in the glossary are given. A short list of easily available textbooks on testing has been used in making these suggestions. Links between glossary entries are also indicated by a system of cross-referencing, so that terms used synonymously are gathered together by a reference to one definition, terms with different but connected meanings are marked *compare* and terms which refer to one detailed aspect of a wider topic are marked *see*. The sample section of text given opposite illustrates some of these characteristics.

At its present stage of development, the glossary exists in an English language version only. The next stage consists of translation into the other project languages, which are Catalan, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Irish, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. A separate wordlist for each language will be linked by a system of numbering entries, so that it is easy to refer from a term in one language to its equivalents in the others.

Publication is planned for late 1996 or early 1997. It is hoped that the glossary will provide a welcome resource for many people involved in a variety of ways in language testing, and that it will have a particularly significant role to play in the development of language testing in the less widely taught languages included, by helping to establish terms which may be new alongside their well-known equivalents in the more commonly used European languages.

In future there is the potential for extending the glossary to include languages not included in the original project. Since work on this project began, the process of admitting two new member organizations representing Lëtzebuergesch and Swedish has started. Later editions of the glossary might be expanded to reflect the growth of the European Union, as it is reflected in ALTE.

A

1. A-parameter
The parameter from item-response theory which relates to the discrimination of an item.
See: item-response theory.
Further reading: Bachman, 1990, p. 204.

2. Ability
A mental trait or the capacity or power to do something.
Compare: competence, proficiency.
Further reading: Bachman, 1990, p. 16, p. 19.

3. Ability scale
In item response theory, an equal interval scale upon which the ability of persons and the difficulty of test tasks can be located.
Also referred to as the **theta scale**.
Further reading: Bachman 1990, p. 345.

4. Absolute scale
A scale with a true zero point, e.g. a scale for measuring length. The absolute zero point cannot be defined in language testing, so this kind of scale is not applicable.
Compare: interval scale, nominal scale, ordinal scale.

5. Accreditation
The granting of recognition of an examination, usually by an official body such as a government body, examinations board, etc.

6. Achievement test
A test designed to measure the extent of learning achieved by a candidate in relation to a particular course of instruction, textbook, etc., i.e. a curriculum-dependent test.
Also referred to as **attainment test**.

7. Adaptive test
A form of testing in which items are selected during the test on the basis of their difficulty, in response to an estimate of the ability of the candidate. Often used to refer to a computer-administered test.
See: computer-adaptive testing.
Further reading: Bachman, 1990, p. 151; Henning, 1987, p. 136.

8. Administration
The date or period during which an examination takes place. Many examinations have a fixed date of administration several times a year, while others may be administered on demand.

9. Affective factors
Factors of a non-cognitive nature which relate to the emotional variables, preferences and attitudes of test takers.
Compare: cognitive factors.
Further reading: Ebel and Frisbie, 1991, p. 52.

10. Alpha (alpha coefficient)
A reliability estimate, measuring the internal consistency of a test. It ranges in value from 0 to 1. It is often used for tests with rating scales as opposed to tests with dichotomous items, although it may be used for both.
Also referred to as **coefficient alpha**.
Compare: Kuder-Richardson.
See: Internal consistency.
Further reading: Henning, 1987, pp. 83-84.

11. Alternate forms
Refer to definition for **equivalent forms**.

12. Analytic scoring
A method of scoring which can be used in tests of productive language use, such as speaking and writing. The assessor makes an assessment with the aid of a list of specific points. For example, in a test of writing, the analytic scale may include a focus on grammar, vocabulary, use of linking devices.
Compare: global assessment, impression marking.
Further reading: Ebel and Frisbie, 1991, p. 195; Weir, 1990, p.63.

13. Anchor item
An item which is included in two or more tests in order to estimate the difference in the degree of difficulty between the tests themselves or the difference in performance between the various groups of candidates.

14. Anchor test
A group of anchor items put together to form a test, which can be administered in association with another test. This is done in order to estimate differences in difficulty between versions of that

THE DANISH LANGUAGE TESTING CONSORTIUM—

The tenth meeting of ALTE was hosted by the Danish Language Testing Consortium. This consortium was formed in 1993 for the express purpose of representing examinations in Danish as a Foreign Language in ALTE. It brings together three organizations, all based in Copenhagen, and each with a distinctive interest in and contribution to make to language testing.

Being responsible for the standard of testing of one of the EU's less widely spoken languages with a specific test tradition, the three representatives of the DTLC share a firm conviction that the

The Danish representatives in ALTE. From left to right, Peter Villads Vedel, Lars Skov and John E. Andersen.

quality development work which is undertaken within ALTE is very important to them. However, they attach an even greater importance to the way in which this work is carried out. ALTE's aim of achieving the highest possible quality in testing, while demonstrating a respect for the differences in testing traditions and in the specific test conditions in the various countries of Europe, is of the greatest significance to the members of the DLTC.

The representatives of the three organizations describe them as follows.

The University of Copenhagen

The University of Copenhagen has a history that dates back to the Middle Ages. It was founded in 1479, but a series of great fires and the English bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807 have left only remnants of the original university buildings, among them the old cellars which include the university dungeons. Once used for containing unruly students, they would in any case be inadequate for dealing with present day student numbers.

The University is by far the largest institution of higher education in Denmark, with 32,000 students and a staff of 4,000 working in six faculties which include Social Science and Law, Health Science, Natural Science, Humanities and Theology. The University is spread over large areas of Copenhagen, but organized around three major campuses. Field research stations spread as far away as Greenland to the north and Chile to the south.

Study programmes

About 3,800 new students are admitted each year. Once a student starts at the University, he or she follows a specialized study programme within a certain area. After three years of full time study the student can be awarded a bachelor's degree. The attainment of a master's degree represents an additional two years of full-time study, including a thesis based on independent research. Since 1992, formalized study programmes at Ph.D. level have also been established. Full-time students do not pay tuition fees, but there is also an 'Open University' system under which it is possible to study on a part-time basis at rates which at present cover approximately 20 per cent of course costs.

Foreign students at the university

The University of Copenhagen participates in a number of co-operative agreements with foreign universities, both bilaterally and as part of international exchange and scholarship programmes such as ERASMUS (now part of SOCRATES) and COMETT (now part of LEONARDO), NORDPLUS and TEMPUS. The number of foreign students coming to Copenhagen and Danish students going abroad through these programmes is growing rapidly.

As most instruction is in Danish, the University arranges special intensive courses in Danish for its foreign students. An increasing number of regular university courses are also offered in English. These courses are open to all students, both Danish and foreign.

Individual foreign students are also able to study at the University of Copenhagen by making a Guest Student Arrangement, which

allows them one year of study at an advanced level which counts towards their eventual degree. If accepted by the department in question, the student enjoys the same rights and privileges as Danish students, except for the right to obtain a final degree in Denmark.

The Institute for Nordic Philology

The Institute for Nordic Philology, which together with Studieskolen and The Danish Refugee Council forms the Danish Language Testing Consortium, is responsible for teaching and testing Danish for all foreign students at the University of Copenhagen. At the Institute research and study programmes in Danish as a Foreign and Second Language are undertaken. Being a mother tongue research institute in the home country of one of the less widely spoken languages of the EU, the Institute has to rely heavily on up-to-date and fair tests of Danish as a Foreign or Second Language in order to secure equal and fair linguistic criteria for the admittance of foreign students to the University. Equally, the University has to be able to offer good language testing to make sure that its Danish students are skilled users of the more widely used foreign languages, which are indispensable for academics today.

Representatives of ALTE member organizations in Copenhagen for the tenth meeting of ALTE.

Language testing in Denmark

The Danish test tradition relies extensively on essay writing and oral interviews. Written tests are normally scored by trained and experienced markers, and all oral tests are marked by external examiners. In general, not much research has been carried out in the field of language testing and test theory in Denmark. This lack of interest may stem from the fact that the Danish educational system emphasizes equality among students, and testing and exams with formal grades are not permitted during the first eight years of school.

A somewhat peculiar Danish politician once made a statement that he is still remembered for, namely that Denmark is too small a language area to support a ballet of its own. When it comes to testing, it is true that Denmark is a small area or market, but the point we would wish to stress is that even a small language area needs to aim for top quality testing. Test results need to be valid and reliable whether they come from tests taken by hundreds of thousands or tests with only a few thousand or a few hundred candidates.

John E. Andersen
Language Coordinator, University of Copenhagen
Associate Professor, Department of Nordic Philology

Studieskolen

Studieskolen in Copenhagen is a non-profit-making institution offering courses in a number of languages and in science. Studieskolen is the largest private language school in Denmark and as such is able to offer language courses that no other school in Denmark can. Instruction in major European languages such as French, English, Spanish and German is available at 15-20 levels, but more 'exotic' languages like Finnish, Greenlandic, Hebrew, Indonesian and Thai are also taught, making a total of 38 languages. Danish as a Second Language is the largest department at Studieskolen.

Studieskolen was established in 1977, but language classes had already existed for many years previous to that as a part of *Folkeuniversitetet* (University Extension) at the University of Copenhagen. By 1977, the language department had grown so much that a decision was made to separate it from *Folkeuniversitetet* and establish it as an independent school under the name *Studieskolen i København*. Similar schools were subsequently set up in the university towns of Roskilde, Odense and Århus.

Studieskolen courses are subsidized by local authorities, allowing fees to be kept low, so that they can cater for a broad variety of participants. The majority of courses are offered as part of a programme of public education, but tailor-made courses can also be run at the request of private companies and state institutions. These include a number of courses which are arranged for foreign students at the University of Copenhagen.

Studieskolen and tests of Danish as a Foreign Language

The University of Copenhagen itself does not offer an extensive programme of instruction in Danish as a Foreign or Second language, so in 1969, when they wanted to establish language tests for foreign students applying to the University of Copenhagen, it was natural that they should ask *Folkeuniversitetet* (later Studieskolen) to organize these. The testing department of Studieskolen originated from that request. The first test to be developed was a test of Danish language at a very high level (Danskprøve 3) and this was followed by two tests at lower levels (Danskprøve 1 and Danskprøve 2). Other members of ALTE have followed a similar pattern of development. Today Danskprøve 2 is the test most frequently taken, as it qualifies those who pass it for entrance to universities and other institutions of higher education.

In the mid-1980s, Denmark took in a large number of refugees, many of whom needed or wished to improve their educational qualifications, and the Danish Refugee Council joined Studieskolen's test development committee. Studieskolen and the Danish Refugee Council currently co-operate in producing and administering Danskprøve 2.

For a number of years the testing department of Studieskolen provided tests in the main European languages. However, the costs involved in the continuous administration and development of tests put such pressure on the system that we now prefer to use the recognized tests represented in the ALTE framework.

Lars Skov
Director of the Danish Language Department, Studieskolen

The Danish Refugee Council—

The Danish Refugee Council is a private humanitarian umbrella organization which brings together some 18 non-governmental organizations with humanitarian concerns, which work on behalf of refugees both in Denmark and internationally. On behalf of the Danish State, the Danish Refugee Council is responsible for an 18-month integration programme which is run specially for refugees who are granted asylum status in Denmark. Part of the programme consists of guidance and tuition. The children and young people are taught in Danish elementary schools, while adult education is part of the Danish Refugee Council's integration programme. In order to undertake this teaching task, the Refugee Council has established a nation-wide chain of language schools.

The Danish Refugee Council's aim has been to establish a system of integration into the life of their new country which is perceived by the refugees as a coherent programme. As a result, a special feature of the programme is that the language school and language teacher work closely with the other groups assisting the refugee in the process of integration – such as the welfare officer, education and careers adviser, housing consultant, culture and leisure officer, and others.

Tuition in Danish as a Second Language is a relatively new subject. Until the mid-1980s it took place in the context of inadequately developed mission statements and guidelines. Tuition was placed under the Spare Time Education Act and based on the 'popular education tradition', i.e. a non-certificated general adult education. The Danish Refugee Council still attaches importance to this tradition, but it has proved necessary to supplement the tuition with a series of language assessments and qualifying tests. In Denmark specialist development in this field was initiated by the teachers and the private schools, including Studieskolen and the Danish Refugee Council. In recent years the Danish county councils, which are responsible for the teaching of Danish as a Foreign Language to adults, have also become involved in the development of Danish language tests.

The Danish Refugee Council and language testing

In Denmark there are no state-controlled language tests of Danish as a Second Language at an elementary level. In 1984 the Danish Refugee Council started developing language assessments and tests and collaborated with Studieskolen and Copenhagen University on the development of Danskprøve 2, which is required for admission to further education. In the early 1990s it began collaborating with the Danish county councils on the development of language assessment at an elementary level (ALTE level 2) and on courses which prepare students for the standard educational options offered by the Danish system, such as general adult education and training for the labour market.

Over the years, the Danish Refugee Council and the Danish county councils have developed a system of collaboration based around five examination boards which prepare guidelines and instructions for Test 1 (which is at ALTE level 1), Test 2 (ALTE level 2), the literacy test, the labour market training preparatory test and the adult education preparatory test. The last two tests roughly correspond to ALTE level 3 and qualify successful candidates for training for entry to the labour market and general adult education respectively. The receiving educational establishments are represented on the examination boards at this 'bridge-building' or 'finishing' level.

The examination boards prepare their language tests in collaboration with a group of item writers. The test papers are distributed through a private publishing firm, Specialpædagogisk Forlag, Herning.

The continuation of development in this highly specialized area of language testing is of great importance to The Danish Refugee Council, and the opportunity to link into a European specialist network like ALTE is particularly welcome.

Peter Villads Vedel
Head of the Language Department, Danish Refugee Council

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PRESENTATIONS

The Copenhagen meeting of ALTE was the first one to be attended by representatives of an Asian testing organization, as well as speakers from two European countries which have not until now been represented in ALTE. The presence of three visitors from the NEEA, the National Educational Examinations Authority of China, which is based in Beijing, offered ALTE members the opportunity to gain insights into the operation of a testing system which routinely numbers its candidates in millions, and to initiate or consolidate contacts with a country where interest in the teaching and testing of European languages is growing fast and has enormous potential importance.

By contrast, presentations on language testing in Luxembourg and Sweden described situations where candidate numbers are comparatively limited. However, language testing in these countries is of great importance, and the accounts given to the meeting illustrated well the fascinating diversity and cultural significance of language use in present-day Europe.

EXAMINATIONS IN CHINA

Mr Yang Xuewei, Director of the NEEA, which is the national examinations authority of the People's Republic of China, gave a presentation on the system of examinations used for entry to higher education in China, with reference both to education in general and to foreign language testing.

A national system of examinations has been set up under Chinese law, and the NEEA established by the State Education Commission for the purpose of setting and administering these examinations. They are set annually, and provide entry to higher education for school-leavers. In 1994, there were 2.5 million candidates, in addition to the 1.5 million adults also seeking access to higher education. That year, some 900,000 candidates were successful in gaining university places. The NEEA also provides tests for adult students who wish to study independently; they are known as 'self-taught' students. Such students have more than 1,000 subjects to choose from, and account for around 5 million test entries per year.

Under the current 'open-door' policies in China, interest in the use of foreign languages, and hence in testing in this area, is increasing. English attracts the highest number of examination candidates, followed by Japanese and Russian, with French, German and Spanish also being studied. Interest is to some extent regional, with greater numbers choosing to study German in Shanghai, and Japanese in the north-eastern region of China.

As well as producing and adminstering its own tests, the NEEA also administers some overseas examinations in English as a Foreign Language, such as TOEFL and the Cambridge Business English Certificate (BEC). Future developments could see this form of collaboration replicated for other European languages. It is also likely to see the development of tests for overseas learners of Chinese languages, including the large numbers of ethnic Chinese descended from emigrants from China, and now established in communities around the world.

LANGUAGE TESTING IN LUXEMBOURG

The use of foreign languages has a particular importance in Luxembourg, a small, prosperous country where some 32% of the 400,000 inhabitants started life in some other European country such as Germany, France, Belgium, Portugal or Italy. In making a presentation to the ALTE meeting of the linguistic situation in Luxembourg, Ernest Wagner of the CLL, the Centre de Langues Luxembourg, described his organization's work in teaching and testing a range of languages, and also in testing Lëtzebuergesch, the native language of the country.

Most of the people who use the services of the CLL as language learners and test candidates are adults motivated by the need to be able to speak to other Europeans in their own languages in order to further business and social contacts. Their demand as learners is for language as a practical means of communication, often in a commercial context. Such learners also want internationally recognized certification, and the CLL acts as a testing centre, offering the examinations set by, among other organizations, members of ALTE such as the Alliance Française, the Goethe-Institut, the Instituto Cervantes, the Università per Stranieri di Perugia and UCLES.

Lëtzebuergesch itself is used mainly as a spoken language. A written form exists - the orthography having been standardized in 1963 - but foreigners living in Luxembourg are unlikely to find it essential to be able to read and write the language. Newspaper articles, for example, are usually written in French or German. However, it is advisable for foreign workers to be able to speak at least some Lëtzebuergesch. The CLL provides tests at three levels for foreign learners, plus one more which is

at native speaker level. Reading and written competence can also be tested, but it is possible either to take oral tests only, or to take an oral test at one level and a test of another skill at a different level. The certificates, which have ministry endorsement, include a statement very much on the lines of the 'can-do' statements produced as part of the ALTE framework project, describing for the benefit of any employer what the holder may be expected to be able to do as a speaker of Letzebuergesch - another manifestation of the practicality which characterizes the approach to language learning in Luxembourg.

THE SWEDISH NATIONAL PROFICIENCY TEST

In the past, the level of proficiency in the Swedish language achieved by overseas students studying at Swedish universities varied greatly, due to the absence of a satisfactory system of language testing. It became clear that a change of policy of language testing was necessary in order to avoid admitting large numbers of students who were doomed from the start to failure, and Margaretha Corell of Stockholm University's Institute for English-Speaking Students explained in her presentation that this was the background to the development of the National Proficiency Test (Rikstest).

The test, which was first administered in 1982, was jointly developed by the universities of Uppsala, Lund, Stockholm, Gothenburg, Umeå and Linkoping. In 1985 the University of Stockholm was given overall responsibility for producing, developing and administering the test, but the other universities retain a degree of involvement in administrative matters, marking and certification, and the test can be taken at all of these universities. The test has six administrations a year, and is open to external candidates as well as internal candidates who have completed a one year preparatory course.

The Swedish National Proficiency Test is made up of five subtests, which between them test listening, reading, vocabulary, speaking and writing. Both the speaking and writing tests are assessed by two or three examiners.

A further test, the Swedish Language Test for Academic Purposes, has been developed for use in screening a slightly different category of candidates for university entry, such as speakers of Swedish as a first language who happen to have been educated abroad. Another test of Swedish, this time at a lower level of proficiency, is also currently being developed by the Centre for Bilingualism of Stockholm University, with the needs of immigrants or refugees in mind.

A new member of ALTE

The Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV)

The *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband* is the German Adult Education Association. The DVV was founded in 1953, and, with sixteen regional organizations representing the *Volkshochschulen* in the federal states (*Länder*), it is the umbrella organization for VHS adult education throughout Germany.

There are 1,060 *Volkshochschulen*, divided into an additional 4,200 local branches, offering a wide range of courses and programmes in very diverse areas of education. In 1993 a total of 482,545 courses were available, with approximately 15 million teaching hours registered and around 6.5 million students enrolled in courses. Of these, 1.8 million were language learners, taking part in 142,146 language courses. A large proportion of this number were taking courses leading to formal language qualifications.

The central secretariat of the DVV is in Bonn, but the organization also supports three scientific institutes: the *Adolf-Grimme-Institut* in Marl takes care of cooperation and coordination between continuing education and the media; the *Institute for International Cooperation* in Bonn deals with the exchange of information and experience in adult education on an international basis; the *German Institute for Adult Education* (DIE) in Frankfurt is a scientific service agency maintaining a link between research and practice in adult education, including languages.

Since 1968 the DVV has developed 42 syllabuses and examinations for adults, of which 16 are in the fields of mathematics, science and technology, including information technology, and 26 are in the area of language. All examinations are centrally administered by the Examinations Office, which services some 3,000 registered adult education centres in 14 countries.

Where German as a Foreign Language is concerned, the DVV offers a qualification in general language at Waystage level, *Grundbaustein Deutsch* (Stage 1 German). At Threshold level the DVV and the Goethe-Institut collaborate on the production and administration of the *Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache*.

The DVV's representative in ALTE is Hans-Dieter Teichmann, Head of the Examinations Office. He can be contacted at:

DIE - Examinations Office
Prüfungszentrale
Eschersheimer Landstraße 61-63
D-60322 Frankfurt
Germany

Tel: 00-49-69-154005140
Fax: 00-49-69-590195

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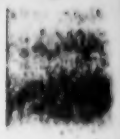

MEMBERS

Alliance Française
101 bd Raspail
75270 Paris
Cedex 06
France

Centre de Langues Luxembourg
80, boulevard G. Pattor
L-2316 Luxembourg

CITO
(Instituut voor Toetsontwikkeling)
P.O. Box 1034
6801 M.G. Arnhem
The Netherlands

Danish Language Testing Consortium
Institut for Nordisk Filologi
Københavns Universitet
Njalsgade 80
København S
Denmark

Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband
DIE Prüfungszentrale
Eschersheimer Landstrasse 61-63
D-60322 Frankfurt am Main
Germany

Generalitat de Catalunya
Direcció General de
Política Lingüística
Mallorca, 272, 8o planta
08037 Barcelona
Spain

Goethe-Institut
Helene-Weber-Allee 1
80637 München
Germany

Instituto Cervantes
Libreros, 23
28801 Alcalá de Henares
Madrid
Spain

ITÉ
(Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann)
31 Pias Mhic Liam
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Ireland

Universidad de Salamanca
Cursos Internacionales
Patio de Escuelas Menores
37008 Salamanca
Spain

Universidade de Lisboa
Departamento de Língua
e Cultura Portuguesa
Alameda da Universidade
1699 Lisboa
Portugal

Università per Stranieri
Palazzo Gallenga
Piazza Fortebraccio 4
06122 Perugia
Italy

University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
1 Hills Road
Cambridge CB1 2EU
United Kingdom

A Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching

The 11th Meeting of ALTE was held in Dublin on 17, 18, 19 November 1995. The meeting was hosted by ITÉ - Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann - and took place in Dublin Castle.

Dr John Trim, representing the Council of Europe, had been invited to attend the meeting on the morning of the first day (Friday 17 November) and to give a keynote presentation on the Council of Europe's Common European Framework Project. In particular, he presented aspects of the draft consultative document which is now known as *A Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching*. A summary of his talk is presented here.

Dr Trim began his talk by outlining in general terms the objectives of the Council for Cultural Co-operation, which is part of the Council of Europe, and provided some background to the Framework Project (Chapter 1 of the draft consultative document). He then reviewed the main chapters of the document in summary terms before concentrating the main focus of his presentation on Chapter 4, which deals with language use and the language user/learner. In this context, the implications for language testing and certification were discussed with the members of ALTE.

Background to the Project

For over thirty years, the Council of Europe has promoted the reform of modern languages teaching in its member states as a means of improving international understanding and co-operation. In particular, its programme aims to make all sections of the population capable of transacting the business of everyday living and exchanging experience and opinion face to face when in another country. This may be at a modest level for occasional visits or at progressively higher levels for residence or professional use.

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continued from page 1

Educational reform is a lengthy process requiring education authorities, course designers, materials developers, teacher trainers, teachers and learners to work together with the sympathetic understanding of parents, employers and political bodies, long enough for reforms to take full effect in the classroom. Examinations and qualifications have a key role in setting objectives, motivating students and monitoring performance. The *Threshold Level* publications from the Council of Europe have played a valuable part in providing the "partners for learning" with a common frame of reference, first for English, now for thirteen other European languages, with seven more under development or planned.

After an updating of *Waystage* and *Threshold* in 1990, work is now underway to apply the same concepts at a higher level than minimal communication requirements (provisionally termed *Vantage Level*) and also to develop a more inclusive framework by reference to which practitioners of all kinds can present curricular guidelines, teaching materials, examination syllabuses, etc., in a coherent and transparent form.

The Draft Consultative Document

Work on the Framework began following an Inter-governmental Symposium which was held in Rüschlikon, Switzerland in November 1991. This meeting was organized at the initiative of the Swiss Federal Government; its theme was 'Transparency and Coherence in Language Learning in Europe: Objectives, Evaluation, Certification'.

The Symposium recommended that the Education Committee of the Council for Cultural Co-operation should establish a comprehensive, coherent and transparent framework for the description of language proficiency.

The work was carried forward by a series of meetings at which invited experts sought to clarify the key issues and to make proposals for further action. Following acceptance by the Modern Language Project Group of some general recommendations, a working party was set up to oversee further developments and to commission studies on specific aspects of the task in hand.

At its first meeting in Strasbourg in 1993, a small 'authoring group' was commissioned to prepare a first draft of the Framework. Successive variations of this draft have now been presented and revised in accordance with recommendations from the working party and the draft consultative document has now been produced in a completed form.

Between January and March 1996 this consultative document is being circulated to over 300 institutions in Europe where people working in relevant areas will have the opportunity to review the document and to send in feedback via a standard questionnaire. The feedback will be collated and evaluated, and the final document will be produced on the basis of this consultation in time for the next Inter-governmental Symposium, which is to be held in Strasbourg in April 1997.

Features of the Framework

The scope of the Framework Project as it is now envisaged in the consultative document is presented in nine chapters and an appendix. The chapter headings are as follows:

1. Historical background
2. Aims and functions of the Common European Framework
3. Approach adopted
4. Language use and the language user/learner
5. Tasks and texts
6. The process of language learning and teaching
7. Linguistic diversification and curriculum design
8. Scaling and levels
9. Assessment

The appendix contains illustrative scales based on the approach set out in chapters 8 and 9.

Chapter 3 explains the basic approach that has been adopted; this re-emphasises the view that learners must be able to fulfil the **tasks** facing them in **situations** which arise in the various **domains** of social existence.

The basis of the approach is an analysis of language use in terms of the **strategies** employed by learners which activate **general** and **communicative competences**. These competences allow learners to carry out **activities** and **processes** that are involved in the **production** and **reception** of **texts** dealing with particular **themes** required by the **tasks** they have to carry out in the **situations** which face them.

The key words (which are in bold) designate the parameters for the description of language use and the learner's ability to use language, which are taken up and discussed in Chapter 4.

Importantly from the point of view of ALTE (as the interest of members is primarily in language assessment), progress in language learning is seen in terms of a series of levels of attainment which can be calibrated and described using descriptors.

The Focus of Dr Trim's Talk

In his talk, Dr Trim concentrated on Chapter 4 of the Framework, which begins with a description of the external context of use of language. This sets each act of language use in the context of the **domains** in which social life is organised: **personal**, **public**, **occupational** and **educational**. In each domain, the situations which may arise are described in terms of the locations in which they occur, the institutions or organisations involved (e.g. the family and social networks), persons and objects in the environment, events (e.g. family occasions, parties, visits), the operations performed (e.g. living routines, DIY, gardening) and the text types encountered within the situation (e.g. teletext, personal letters, magazines).

The external conditions in which communication occurs impose **constraints** on the people involved in terms of physical conditions, which may, for example, be noisy, social conditions, such as the relative status of participants, and time pressures, as, for example, when one participant in a telephone conversation has plenty of time to chat, while the other has a client waiting. The **mental contexts** within which the participants find themselves also have an influence on the nature of communication, since we all interpret situations differently according to our experience and current preoccupations.

A section of Chapter 4 on **communicative tasks and purposes** deals with the tasks the language user has to be able to perform, and the situations in which he/she has to be able to function. In the occupational domain, these may include understanding safety and security regulations, and also participating in the social life of the workplace. In the educational domain, a distinction can be made between the tasks the learner needs to be able to deal with as a language user, and those which are part of the educational process itself. Among the task types are included ludic uses of language, such as telling jokes and making puns, and aesthetic uses, whether receptive or productive.

As in the *Threshold* specification, **themes** for communication are identified, which can be broken down further into **sub-themes** and **specific notions**. Thus, the theme 'free time, entertainment' includes the sub-theme 'sports', involving the specific notions of the locations, institutions and organisations, persons, objects, events and actions concerned.

Communicative language activities are sub-divided into those which are **productive**, **receptive**, **interactive** and **mediating**. Oral production includes activities as diverse as addressing audiences and singing, while examples of written production include creative writing as well as filling in forms and questionnaires. Receptive activities concern listening and reading, including specific purposes for these activities - listening or reading for gist, for specific information, for detailed understanding, etc. Interactive activities may be spoken or written, and include formal discussion, debate and interviews, and the exchange of correspondence by memos, faxes and e-mail. Mediating activities include translation, interpretation, summarising and paraphrasing in order to facilitate communication between others.

Chapter 4 also deals with the **processes of communication**, which consist of **planning**, followed by **execution**; this can be divided into **production** and **reception**, or the overlapping productive and receptive processes termed **interaction**. The term **monitoring** describes the process of incorporating feedback into communication, for example in coping with communication breakdown or unexpected events. Practical actions, such as pointing, paralinguistic behaviour (e.g. body language, sounds such as 'shh' and use of prosodic qualities such as loudness and pitch). Paratextual features (use of photographs, typographic features in written texts) are also features of this process.

In this document the term **text** is used to refer to any piece of language, whether written or spoken. Texts are classified as belonging to various **genres** and **text types**, and are expressed through a variety of **media**.

In order to carry out the tasks and activities required of them, language users have to draw upon the **competences** developed in the course of their previous experience of life. These can be seen as **general competences** and **communicative language competences**. General competences include not only knowledge of the world and socio-cultural knowledge related to such areas of life as inter-personal relations and values, beliefs and attitudes, but also practical skills, personality factors and the ability to study and learn. Communicative language competences cover a wide area which includes knowledge of, and ability to use, vocabulary and grammar. It also includes socio-linguistic competence (e.g. awareness of and ability to use politeness conventions, register and accent) and pragmatic competence, which refers to the organization of text as discourse.

Finally, **strategies** are the means the user employs to call up communicative resources and activate skills and procedures. This involves applying the principles of pre-planning, execution, monitoring and repair action to the different kinds of communicative activity, reception, interaction, production and mediation. For example, where production is concerned, planning involves rehearsing, locating resources, considering the audience and task adjustment, while execution means compensation, building on previous knowledge and trying out.

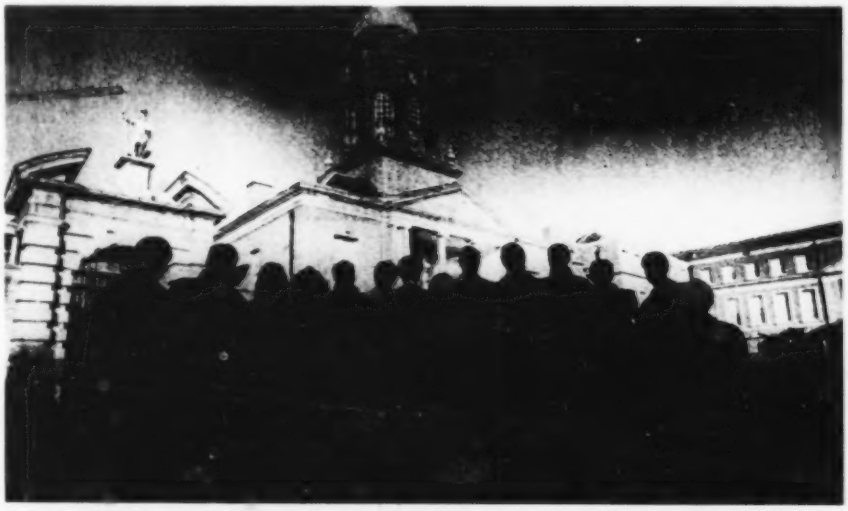
ALTE has been following the developments of the Framework with interest, and the work that ALTE has been carrying out since 1990 on developing its own framework of examinations shares many of the concerns of the Council of Europe Project. ALTE and the Council of Europe have recognized this convergence of interests in a number of ways. Some individuals from the member organizations of ALTE have been on the Council of Europe's working party and, more recently, ALTE as a group has been commissioned by the Council of Europe to produce a "User's Guide" for those involved in developing examinations. This guide will accompany the Framework document. This will be completed in March 1996 and will be based on work already completed by ALTE as part of a LINGUA-funded project in 1994.

In relation to the extension of level-descriptions beyond *Threshold*, ALTE is the co-sponsor of work currently being carried out by John Trim and Jan van Ek on the *Vantage Level* (as reported in ALTE News, December 1994 issue). This is due for completion early in 1996 and the authors will be invited to present their work at the next ALTE meeting (Frankfurt, April 1996).

ITÉ - The Linguistics Institute of Ireland —

ITÉ (Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann or The Linguistics Institute of Ireland) was set up by the Minister for Education in 1972 to be the national centre for research on state language policies. Its programme of work involves it, therefore, with a great variety of topics, including, for example, the teaching of foreign languages in Ireland, the use of the English language in Ireland and, in recent years, the language of the deaf community in Ireland.

The Irish language, however, is its first priority. Ever since Ireland became independent in 1922, it has been state policy to promote the learning and use of Irish, the historical language of Ireland from pre-Christian times, and its daily spoken language down to the 19th century, during which it was largely replaced by English. Thus ITÉ is engaged in a continuous series of studies, some of them stretching back to its foundation, on topics determined by the state's principal Irish language policies. These include the teaching of Irish in schools (where it is compulsory in primary and post-primary education), language maintenance and shift in Irish-speaking areas, the patterns of English-Irish bilingualism that are emerging nation-wide, and the attitude of people generally towards the language, their ability to speak it, and the use they actually make of it.



Members of ALTE at the Dublin meeting in November 1995

Colmán Ó Huallacháin

Although ITÉ in its present form was founded in 1972, its origins go back to the work done a decade earlier by the Franciscan, Colmán Ó Huallacháin. A student of the philosopher Louis de Raeymaeker at the University of Leuven, he made a critical contribution to the development of contemporary Irish lexicography and linguistics, producing in 1958 *Foclóir Fealsaimh* (A Philosophical Dictionary) in which he translated philosophical terms from English, French, German and Latin into Irish.

In matters of language learning, he was greatly influenced by the corpus-based approach of Le Français Fondamental, and produced in 1966 a tagged corpus of 200,000 words of spoken Irish, transcribed from taped conversations. This was done to determine the optimal syntactic and lexical content of Irish courses for primary school children. So successful was the project that the old courses based on it are still widely used and are only now undergoing their first systematic revision, some 30 years after they were introduced.

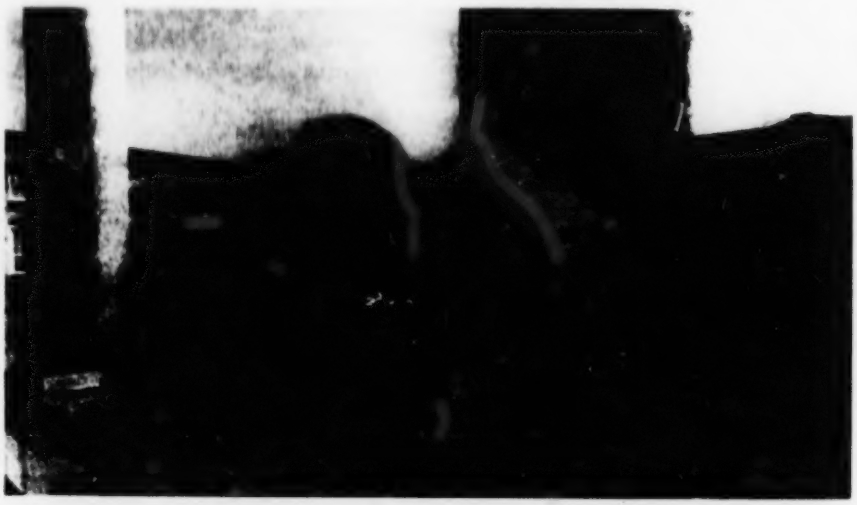
Like other early projects in linguistic research on Irish, the corpus project is now being pursued in a European context. The Institute is a partner in the Union-funded project *Parole*, which will create standardized corpora and tagsets for all the Union languages, including Irish, by the end of 1997. It is also a partner in the European Science Foundation's project on the taxonomy of European languages.

Tests of Irish

The testing of abilities in Irish is central to ITÉ's work on the assessment of state policies. Starting in 1977, a series of oral and listening tests in Irish was developed for three levels of proficiency in primary schools (Béaltriail Ghaeilge ITÉ, Leibhéil 1, 2, 3). These are used in national surveys to monitor standards and to

evaluate the effectiveness of different programmes of instruction. A second series of tests (Trialacha Teanga ITÉ, Leibhéil 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) is being developed for post-primary schools, and a third has been created, in conjunction with the National Council for Vocational Awards, for learners of Irish in vocational training. The latter tests are administered yearly in May at centres throughout the country.

Tests for adult learners of Irish will be available in 1996. They will be the Réamhtheastas (Preliminary Certificate) and Bunteastas (Basic Certificate), corresponding to the Council of Europe's *Waystage* and *Threshold* levels, and to ALTE levels 1 and 2. A *Threshold Level* for Irish, Leibhéal Tairsi don Ghaeilge, is currently being written, in consultation with the Council of Europe, by Dónall Ó Baoill and Diarmuid Ó Sé in the Structural Linguistics Department of ITÉ.



Eoghan Mac Aogáin, Director of ITÉ

Collaboration with the Council of Europe goes back to 1977, when ITÉ joined its Modern Languages Project. John Trim, Director of the Council's Modern Languages Programme, served for many years as a Member of the Institute, and Joe Sheils, Head of Modern Languages in ITÉ, has been on secondment to the Council for the past four years to help with the Framework Project. Joe Sheils is also the author of *Communication in the Modern Languages Classroom*, published by the Council and already translated into French, German, Russian and Lithuanian.

Other Activities

ITÉ has a staff of about 30 at present. In addition to the Departments of Modern Languages and Structural Linguistics, it also has Departments of Sociology of Language and Psycholinguistics. Recent work in the Sociology of Language Department also shows an increasing involvement in European projects, some of which, such as the recent European Language Policy Research Network, are co-ordinated by ITÉ. The Department of Psycholinguistics has been concerned predominantly with the teaching and testing of Irish at primary and pre-school levels, and with psychological models of second-language acquisition and performance. At present it is also responsible, in collaboration with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, for the revision of the primary school Irish courses referred to earlier.

In accordance with its constitution, the Institute's library and reading-room are open to the public, and ITÉ's in-house journal, *Teangeolas*, together with lists of recent publications relevant to the language professions in Ireland, are distributed to the public on request. ITÉ also edits and publishes, in conjunction with *Multilingual Matters*, the international journal *Language, Culture and Curriculum*. ITÉ is fully funded by the Department of Education and is a national agency for the administration of the Socrates and Leonardo projects. It provides a secretariat for the Irish Association for Remedial and Applied Linguistics, the Irish affiliate of AILA, and provides editorial support for its journal, *Teanga*.

The Institute is located in a fine old Georgian building at 31 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2. If you happen to be passing, call in.

Other Presentations Made at Dublin

Two other presentations were made at Dublin in addition to that made by Dr Trim. The first was made by Professor Sophia Papaefthymiou-Lytra of the University of Athens, and the second by Manfred Schifko of the University of Graz on Austrian tests of German as a Foreign Language and Sibylle Bolton of the Goethe-Institut on the cooperation between the Goethe-Institut, Austria and Switzerland.

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The Centre de Langues Luxembourg (CLL)

The latest organization to become a member of ALTE is the Centre de Langues Luxembourg. It was founded in 1981 as an experimental school under the direction of the Ministry of Education. In 1991 it was integrated into the national Adult Education Service as a government institution.

Its primary aim is the promotion of both national and foreign languages through the organization of courses for adults and young adults.

In order to meet the demand for language instruction in Luxembourg, where nearly a third of the population comes originally from another country, the CLL provides language teaching for vocational as well as general purposes. Courses are run in Luxembourgish, French, German, English, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Dutch. Other languages can be offered on a temporary basis, as the need arises.

For learners of Luxembourgish, the CLL has created special course materials, including a student's book accompanied by audio-cassettes, called *L wéi Lëtzebuergesch*.

A secondary aim of the CLL is the certification of competence in various languages.

The CLL itself is responsible for organizing the examination and certification of communicative competence in Luxembourgish. The certificates are endorsed by the Ministry of Education, and anybody, regardless of course attendance or period of residence in the country, may register for the examinations.

The CLL is also the official examination centre in Luxembourg for the following institutions: the Alliance Française and DELF/DALF, UCLES, the Goethe-Institut, Instituto Cervantes, the Nederlandse Taalunie and the Università per Stranieri di Perugia.

The CLL regularly issues documentation concerning examinations and certification in Luxembourgish and in other languages. Examinations take place twice a year.

The examinations in Luxembourgish are, in order of difficulty:

- Zertifikat Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (*Waystage* level) - ZLaF
- Eischten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (*Threshold* level) - 1DLaF
- Zweten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (Independent User level) - 2DLaF
- Iweschten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch (near-native-speaker level) - IDL

The LaF examinations provide for the separate assessment of oral and written skills. This is done in recognition of the fact that Luxembourgish is above all a language of oral communication, and has limited written use. As reading comprehension is considered to be of greater importance than written expression, these competences are separately tested and certificated. The highest level examination, however, the IDL, consists of four skills-based components, all of which must be passed.

The representative of the CLL in ALTE is the Head of the organization, Ernest Wagner. He can be contacted at:

Centre de Langues Luxembourg (CLL)
80 boulevard G. Patton
L-2316 Luxembourg
Tel: (352) 40 39 41
Fax: (352) 40 39 30

ALTE Home Page on the World Wide Web

From January 1996, information about ALTE can be found on the World Wide Web.

All of the information which is currently presented in ALTE Document 1 (English version) can now be accessed in this electronic form.

It also includes details of the members' organizations and the examinations they offer. There is a brief glossary covering the language-testing terms used. We hope to add more information in the future and will build in additional hyper-text links.

The WWW address is as follows:

http://www.edunet.com/alte/